

Jānakī Maṅgala

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration and
English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

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CONTENTS

1. Dedication:		Page: 5
2. Preface:		Page: 6
3. Introduction— A brief background and outline of the story		Page: 8
4. Janki Mangal:		Page: 13—120
(a) Invocational prayer—		verse 1-2
(b) Janakpur—Preparations for Sita's Swayambar—		verse 3-14
(c) Ayodhya—Sage Vishwamitra's request for Sri Ram—		verse 15-30
(d) Arrival of Sri Ram & Laxman at Vishwamitra's hermitage; Protection of fire sacrifice & slaying of demons—		verse 31-38
(e) Arrival at Janakpur—		verse 39-Ch. 6
(f) Sri Ram enchants all in Janakpur; The effect of his presence on Janak, queens, citizens, kings etc.—		verse 49-80
(g) Sri Ram and the bow-breaking ceremony—	Ch.10-	verse 112
(h) Festivities and preparations for marriage; arrival of marriage party—	Ch. 14-	verse 130
(i) The marriage rituals & celebrations—		verse 131-152
(j) Marriage of Sri Ram's brothers—	Ch. 19-	verse 155

(k) Honour shown to the groom's party, and departure for Ayodhya—	verse 156-179
(l) Meeting with sage Parashuram	verse 177-178
(m) Arrival in Ayodhya, and celebrations	verse 180-Ch.24
5. Appendix—Family tree of Lord Sri Ram & Sita—	Page: 121
6. About the Author:	Page: 124

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

"He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!" [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

Jānakī Maṅgala

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PREFACE

In this Book we shall be reading the story of Lord Ram's marriage with Sita. Lord Ram was an incarnation on earth as a human being of Lord Vishnu who is the macrocosmic form of the Supreme Being known in the Upanishads as Brahm. Sita is a manifestation of goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Vishnu and the patron goddess of material prosperity and wealth that Vishnu needs to take care of this visible world dependent upon material things for its sustenance.

This Book 'Janki Mangal' is entirely dedicated to narrating this story of Lord Ram's marriage in magnificent poetic verses in the inimitable style of Tulsidas, the great saint-poet of India who was a great devotee of the Lord and a prolific writer who used his talent to serve the Lord he loved with his heart by singing the Lord's glories and narrating the various episodes of his divine story in a language so sweet and heart-touching that they have remained unparalleled as a benchmark of beautiful literature in the annals of Indian devotional literary history.

The marriage of Lord Ram with Sita symbolizes the union of the cosmic Consciousness, represented by Lord Ram, with Shakti, represented by Sita. This union enabled the otherwise neutral Consciousness to become active and acquire dynamism necessary to free the earth from the tyranny unleashed by cruel forces represented by the demons who were headed by their notorious king, the 10-headed Ravana who ruled over Lanka.

I will be including the full original text of this wonderful book along with an easy flowing and simple English version that will be accompanied with explanations and commentaries as and when needed.

At the end of the book I have added an appendix that lists the great kings of the two dynasties to which Lord Ram and Sita belonged. It is a standard practice in Indian marriages that the genealogy of both the groom and the bride are read out aloud, especially if they belong to two great families.

The verses of 'Janki Mangal' are routinely sung during the course of marriage celebrations as well as later on in life by the married couple as it is believed that they bring auspiciousness and all round welfare to the couple and pave the way for their happiness and well-being.

Finally, I dedicate this book to my beloved Lord Ram and my most respected Guru, Lord Hanuman, with a humble prayer to forgive me if I have committed any errors inadvertently, because my intention is to sing the glories of my beloved Lord to the best of my ability, and nothing more.

I must also express my thanks to Sri Somil Bharti ji, B.Tech (IIT, Kanpur) and MBA (IIM, Calcutta) who has done the Roman Transliteration of the original Hindi Text for me.

I hope my readers will enjoy and find pleasure in reading it, and if even one soul finds happiness and joy, cheer and exhilaration, then my efforts would be deemed successful.

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INTRODUCTION

A brief background and outline of the story

The Background—The cruel demons were tormenting all the creatures on this earth. They had even conquered the gods in the heaven. To get rid of their tyranny, sages and Mother Earth approached Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the supreme Lord, to give them succour and protection. Vishnu assured them he will come down to earth as a human being and kill their tormentors, the demons.

The Story—Thus, Vishnu manifested himself as Lord Ram by taking birth as a son of king Dasrath of Ayodhya. Dasrath had earlier done severe Tapa (penance and austerity) in his previous birth as king Manu. In that birth, Manu's wife was Satarupa who became Kaushalya in the present life. The couple had wanted Vishnu as their son. So, Lord Vishnu fulfilled their desire by becoming their son known as Lord Ram.

Meanwhile, Lord Vishnu's eternal divine consort, goddess Laxmi, revealed herself as Sita, and therefore it had to be arranged that Vishnu and Laxmi could come together as human couples also in the form of Ram and Sita. While Ram was the son of Dasrath of Ayodhya, Sita became the daughter of Janak, the king of Janakpur.

This story 'Janki Mangal' describes the divine union of Lord Vishnu as Ram, and goddess Laxmi as Sita as husband and wife in their human forms.

Since the almighty Lord Vishnu had taken a human form, certain obligations had to be met in order to comply with the laws of Nature and creation that deal with life in this mortal world, because the creator of cosmic laws cannot violate the same laws that he himself had created for his own creation if he wanted to maintain order in this creation and expected others to adhere to the laws of Nature and creation. It would be ridiculous and incongruous to expect the Lord to violate his own laws.

So it was maneuvered by divine mandate that a sage named Vishwamitra would take Ram to protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by demons, and once this is accomplished an invitation would come to the sage to attend the marriage ceremony of Sita at Janakpur. Naturally, the sage took Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman along as a sight-seeing tour of a new country just like modern-day boys are taken on a holiday outing by their school teachers.

The three—the sage along with Ram and Laxman—were warmly welcomed by king Janak. The king was absolutely swept off his feet when he saw the two handsome princes, and his heart told him that Ram was the fittest candidate as a groom for his daughter Sita. But there was a hitch. It was that the king had already made a stern vow that anyone who would lift the bow of Lord Shiva that had been kept with him from some ancient time would marry Sita. This vow became the fish-bone in his throat.

Janak had invited all famous kings and princes of the time to attend this bow ceremony and try their hand at lifting it so that Sita could be married to them. Actually, Janak had wanted a valorous and strong young prince with a powerful personality to be his son-in-law, and this was the test that he devised for the purpose—because it was not a joke to play fools with Lord Shiva's bow.

Meanwhile, Lord Ram and Laxman took the permission of sage Vishwamitra and went on a sight-seeing round of the city of Janakpur. The entire city erupted in joy and was enthralled at the magnificently charming sight of the two brothers meandering majestically through the streets of Janakpur. The citizens, young and old, longed to see Ram as the royal groom, and all of them with exception prayed to Lord Shiva to fulfill their wishes. While on this sight-seeing tour, Ram and Laxman also happened to enter the royal gardens where Sita had incidentally come to pray to goddess Parvati, the divine consort of Shiva himself. When she saw the Lord she was completely bewitched and decided in her heart that she will marry Ram. But again the stern vow of her father and the horrible ignominy that would come to the immaculate reputation of the family known for righteousness, probity and decorum by being bold enough to openly declare her love for Ram made her extremely depressed and worried. She however prayed to goddess Parvati to make things happen in such a way that she would be married to Ram alone.

Now we see two prayers were working in favour of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita—one was the prayer of the citizens, and the other was of Sita. Come to think of it, even Janak might have prayed silently to Shiva to maneuver things subtly and politely in such a way that Sita could be married to Ram and his honour could still be maintained. Not only the king but his queen, the mother of Sita, too prayed to Parvati to make this happen.

When the D-day arrived, a huge crowd gathered at the venue of the bow ceremony. All eyes were focused on Lord Ram who sat along with his brother Laxman and sage Vishwamitra on a special throne king Janak had arranged for the sage. When Sita appeared on the stage, some wise kings decided that Ram was a fit candidate for her, and so abstained from attempting to lift the bow. But of course there were others who became greedy and passionate when they saw a beautiful princess whose beauty was unmatched in this world. The sober kings tried to dissuade them from being foolish and greedy, but as expected they wouldn't listen. In fact, instead of waiting for their turn patiently, they jostled with each other as they feared that the man in front would lift the bow and deprive others of the chance to marry Sita. So everyone wanted to be the first to lift the bow!

As it finally transpired, all failed to move the bow, and sat down dejected with low faces in utter humiliation. Janak was dismayed and he openly rebuked the assembled kings and princes, calling all of them impotent and weak. It was then that the chance came—sage Vishwamitra asked Ram to do what was destined. On his instructions, Lord Ram not only lifted the bow but broke it into two as he bent the creaky bow to string it.

The sky and the earth erupted in jubilation. There was a thunderous uproar of praise and musical instruments. It appeared that this was the best moment in the lives of all creatures who lived in that era.

Message was sent to king Dasrath to come with the marriage party and witness the marriage of Ram and Sita. The marriage was formalized with great pomp and pageantry. Lord Ram's other three brothers, i.e. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were also married in the same venue with a sister and two cousins of Sita.

The thunder of the breaking bow meanwhile reached the ears of another sage named Parashuram. He was a stout devotee of Lord Shiva and a warrior sage. He thought that someone had insulted Shiva, so he picked up his battle-axe to punish the arrogant fellow who had the temerity to commit such a crime, and rushed towards the marriage venue. Brimming over with anger and wrath, he confronted Ram and Laxman with vitriol pouring forth. Lord Ram however kept his calm and dignity, and finally managed to calm the angry sage who realised that Ram was not an ordinary human prince but the divine Lord Vishnu himself who is worshipped by the whole world. So the sage asked Lord Ram for forgiveness and went to the mountains to do Tapa (penance).

So, Lord Ram married Sita, and the marriage party returned to Ayodhya to rousing reception.

The Book "Janki Mangal", which can be translated into English to mean "Marriage of Lord Ram with Sita", thus describes this eternal story with all its charm and magnificence as it was sung by the great saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas in his books 'Janki Mangal', 'Ram Lala Nahachu', and the epic 'Ram Charit Manas'.

'Janki Mangal' ("Jānakī Maṅgala") was written by the revered saint-poet Goswami Tulsidas between 1572 and 1573 A.D (which corresponds to the Hindu calendar 1629-30, Vikram Samvat).

In this beautiful poetic composition, Tulsidas has narrated the auspicious marriage of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being, whose full story is narrated by the poet in his renowned epic 'Ram Charit Manas', better and commonly known as the 'Ramayana', with his divine consort Sita who was an incarnation of Goddess Laxmi, the divine consort of Lord Vishnu.

Goswami Tulsidas was a par-excellent devotee of Lord Sri Ram, and a prolific, accomplished and versatile poet who produced a stupendously magnificent array of devotional literature on the theme of Lord Ram, stressing on the philosophy of having complete devotion, faith and submission towards the Supreme Being that has ever been produced in Hindi—especially the local colloquial dialect of the language that is known as 'Avadhi'.

His compositions are very melodious, beautiful, soul-stirring, and have a profound impact on one's heart and mind. Whether one is spiritually inclined or not, Tulsidas' works hold all readers and listeners in their thrall, almost mesmerized by their charm and beauty. It is said that in all he produced 10-11 compositions, big and small, and all are acclaimed as masterpieces in themselves.

The style of composition of Janki Mangal follows the pattern known as 'Chanda'. The characteristic feature of a 'Chanda' is that it consists of 'four lines', and these four lines are arranged one on the top of the other in such a way that the last word of one pair of two lines rhyme with each other.

Again, the Chanda is of two types—viz. the ‘Hansa-gati Chanda’, and the ‘Hari-geetika Chanda’. The ‘Hansa-gati Chanda’ consists of a set of two 2-line verses stacked over each other in the pattern of a pair of Dohas of Dohawali. Each of these 2-line verses is numbered separately. The last words of the two lines of any one verse rhyme with each other, but not with the last words of the other verse. Hence, the ‘Hansa-gati Chanda’ has a pair of two independent verses appearing simultaneously. The total number of lines in this Chanda is $2 \times 2 = 4$.

On the other hand, the ‘Hari-geetika Chanda’ is sung without a pause. It also has four lines, but these four lines are part of a single verse. The rhyming of the last words of the lines follows the pattern of the Hansa-gati Chanda, i.e. the last words of the first two lines (line no. 1-2) rhyme with each other, and the lines of the third and fourth lines rhyme with each other. These four lines form a single verse. Hence, this Chanda also has 4 lines like the Hansa-gati Chanda.

To illustrate what I mean, if we see the beginning of the book we find that verse nos. 1-8 are grouped in such a fashion that two verses appear together in pairs, viz. verse nos. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 and 7-8 form pairs of four lines each. This is the ‘Hansa-gati Chanda’.

The next verse also has four lines but it is numbered independently as verse no. 1. This is the ‘Hari-geetika Chanda’. Though it has four lines but they are part of a single verse.

In the context of the flow of the narrative of the text, the ‘Hari-geetika Chanda’ acts as a pause between a set of ‘Hansa-gati Chandas’ that precede and follow it. These Chandas are specially set to beautiful, heart-touching melodious tunes which, when rendered by expert singers, can completely captivate the mind and enchant the heart of the listener, holding the entire audience spellbound. The magic of Tulsidas’ composition is that one is so naturally enthralled by them that one loses awareness of the humdrum existence around him and the problems of every-day mundane life in spite of the possibility of his not understanding any word of what is being said as one may not know the language. This is due to various factors—one being the inherent charm of the melody of the verses, and the other, the more important and significant reason being their devotional content. These verses touch the soul directly, for which language is no barrier. It is like the case of a blind man eating some sweet dish—he may not see it, he may not even know its name, but he nevertheless enjoys the heavenly taste!

One other similar book written by Tulsidas on these lines is ‘Parvati Mangal’ where he describes the auspicious marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati. Both these two books, i.e. the present one called ‘Janki Mangal’, and the other one called ‘Parvati Mangal’ follow the same pattern of the narrative. Both of them are equally popular in India, and during marriage ceremonies they are both recited with fervor and devotion. It is also believed that regular reading of these two holy books grants a boon on unmarried boys and girls that they are soon able to find their life partners who are compatible to them. Not only this, regular reading and recitation of these two books describing the marriage of Lord Ram and Lord Shiva respectively brings all-round happiness, joy and well-being in the lives of married couples.

In this book ‘Janki Mangal’ there are a total of 192 verses of two lines each, and 24 Chandas of four lines each. The narrative starts with the preparation for Janki’s (another name of Sita) marriage at Janakpur, her father’s kingdom. It then goes on to describe how sage Vishwamitra bought Lord Ram here, the breaking of Shiva’s bow by

the Lord, a pre-condition that was set for Janki's (Sita's) marriage by her father, king Janak of Janakpur, the actual marriage of the Lord with Sita, followed by the marriage of his other three brothers as well to the sister and cousins of Sita, celebrations in Janakpur, departure of the groom's party for his native place Ayodhya, the capital of king Dasrath, the father of Ram, the anger of sage Parashuram who came rushing in when he learnt of the breaking of Shiva's bow and how Lord Ram pacified him, and the arrival of the grooms' party along with their brides at Ayodhya. The narrative concludes by describing some of the festivities in Ayodhya and the rituals that were undertaken when the married couples entered the royal palace.

It will be interesting to note that an almost identical description of the auspicious marriage of Lord Ram and Sita is given in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Sortha (a type of Doha) no. 361 with which Baal Kand ends.

Since it is believed that Tulsidas started writing Ram Charit Manas in A.D. 1574, whereas Janki Mangal was penned between A.D. 1572-73, it is obvious that the description of the Lord's marriage in Janki Mangal were borrowed heavily by the poet, Tulsidas, when he composed Ram Charit Manas.

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Goswami Tulsidas Series: Book 4

Jānakī Maṅgala

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Invocational prayer

गुरु गनपति गिरिजापति गौरि गिरापति ।
सारद सेष सुकबि श्रुति संत सरल मति ॥१॥
हाथ जोरि करि बिनय सबहि सिर नावौ ।
सिय रघुबीर बिबाहु जथामति गावौ ॥२॥

guru ganapati girijāpati gauri girāpati.
sārada sēṣa sukabi śruti santa sarala mati. 1.
hātha jōri kari binaya sabahi sira nāvaum.
siya raghubīra bibāhu jathāmati gāvaum. 2.

1-2. I (Tulsidas) bow my head most reverentially to my Guru (moral preceptor), Lord Ganesh, Lord Shiva, Gauri (Parvati, the divine Goddess and the consort of Shiva), the Lord of the spoken word (represented by Lord Brahma, the creator of the Vedas, the ancient scriptures that were the first spoken texts), goddess Sharda (Saraswati, the patron goddess of knowledge and speech), Seshnath (the legendary serpent who supports the world), the great poets and bards (Sukabi), the Srutis (Vedas), and simple-hearted and pious saints.

I join the palms of my hands as a mark of great respect to all of you, and I also pray to all of you in order to invoke your combined blessing as I am about to sing (narrate in poetic verses) about the auspicious marriage ceremony of Lord Sri Ram and Sita, and the festivities associated with it, according to my intelligence and understanding. [So, please be gracious, and help me in my pious efforts.] (1-2)

[Note—It is a tradition that when one starts on any enterprise he first invokes the Gods and Goddesses to bless him and pave the way for his success. It is also to show respect to the divine powers of the Supreme Lord in its many manifestations, and to invoke these powers so that a person's noble venture is completed without problems and bears the desired fruits.]

Preparation for the Swayambar (marriage ceremony)

सुभ दिन रच्यौ स्वयंबर मंगलदायक ।
 सुनत श्रवन हिय बसहिं सीयरघुनायक ।।3।।
 देस सुहावन पावन बेद बखानिय ।
 भूमि तिलक सम तिरहुति त्रिभुवन जानिय ।।4।।

subha dina racyau svayambara maṅgaladāyaka.
 sunata śravana hiya basahim sīyarahunāyaka. 3.
 dēsa suhāvana pāvana bēda bakhāniya.
 bhūmi tilaka sama tirahuti tribhuvana jāniya. 4.

3-4. On an auspicious day, royal arrangements were made for the marriage ceremony, known as a Swayambar, of Sita. Tulsidas says that by merely hearing about this auspicious occasion of the marriage of Lord Ram with Sita, the divine couple resides in the heart of the hearer.

This ceremony was organized in a country called ‘Tirhut’ which was exceptionally pleasant, beautiful and charming. This venue was best place on the earth. In fact, it was regarded as a crown-jewel amongst all the places in the entire creation consisting of three subsections known as the ‘Tribhuvan’. It was so magnificent that it also found fame in the Vedas (which extolled its beauty and worthiness for top honours). (3-4)

[Note :- A *Swayambar* was an occasion when the marriage of a girl was formalized. There were a number of ways this was done—viz. (a) As the name suggests, the girl could select and choose the groom of her choice, and (b) The father of the girl used to set a pre-condition, and any gentleman who fulfilled it became eligible to marry her. In the case of Sita, the latter system was followed, and the condition which was stipulated was the breaking of the heavy and sturdy bow of Lord Shiva that was known as ‘Pinak’.

Tirhut was another name of the kingdom of Janakpur whose king was Janak, the father of Sita. The word ‘Tirhut’ has its genesis in the presence of three great ancient sages who were experts in performing fire sacrifices on a regular basis. These three were Yagyawalkya, Gautam and Vishwamitra. In common usage this place was more popularly known as the kingdom of Janakpur. In the present-day India, this covers the areas of Darbhanga and Muzzafarpur in the eastern state of Bihar. In ancient times, the capital city of this area was known as Janakpur, and today it falls in Nepal. See verse no. 5 below.

The area was very pleasant and free from wild plants and thorns. It was always vibrant with greenery and well provided for in terms of financial well-being and prosperity.

The word *Tribhuvan* refers to the three legendary worlds—the heavens, the earth and the subterranean world.]

तहँ बस नगर जनकपुर परम उजागर ।
 सीय लच्छि जहँ प्रगटी सब सुख सागर ।।5।।
 जनक नाम तेहि नगर बसै नरनायक ।
 सब गुन अवधि न दूसर पटतर लायक ।।6।।

taham̐ basa nagara janakapura parama ujāgara.
 siya lacchi jaham̐ pragaṭi saba sukha sāgara. 5.
 janaka nāma tēhim̐ nagara basai naranāyaka.
 saba guna avadhi na dūsara paṭatara lāyaka. 6.

5-6. There, in the country called Tirhut, was a famous city called Janakpur (which was its capital). In this city, goddess Laxmi (the divine consort of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme God) manifested herself in the person of Sita who was like an ocean of all things auspicious, cheerful, blissful, delightful and joyous. (5)

There lived a king there by the name of Janak. He possessed all the good virtues one can imagine of, and there was no one comparable or akin to him anywhere in the world. [That is, Janak was an extremely wise, enlightened and acclaimed king. He possessed peerless noble virtues and grand qualities the like of which no one possessed at that time anywhere on earth. The other name of king Janak was 'Shir-dwaj'. There was no king who was like him in the past, no one at that current time, and no one would be in the future. See verse no. 7.] (6).

[Note—Regarding the birth of king Janak and naming of the kingdom and the capital after him, there is a legend that sage Vashistha had once cursed king Nimi and the latter had died. The other sages and seers of the place found that there was no one to head the kingdom, and therefore to avoid a power vacuum they churned Nimi's dead body to produce a son who was named 'Mithi', as he was a product of 'churning'. {'Mathana' in Hindi means 'churning'. Mithi is derived from Mathana. 'Mithi' means the result of churning something.}]

Mithi established a kingdom named after him as 'Mithila-puri'. Since that time, the kings of this dynasty assumed the general name of 'Mithilesh'—the lord of the kingdom of Mithila-puri, or those kings who belonged to the line of king Mithi.

These kings of this dynasty were also called 'Janak' which was assumed to be their general title or surname. This word refers to the fact that the first king of this dynasty was born directly from the body part of his father, the 'Janak'. {Janak = father.} Another reason is that the kings of this dynasty were so nice and graceful that all of them looked after their kingdom and its subjects as if they were his dearest possessions and beloved off-springs. Since these kings were like a 'father' for all the people of the kingdom, they were honoured by the title of 'Janak', meaning 'father'.

The third name assigned to the kings of this lineage was 'Videha', meaning 'one without a body'. This epithet has two connotations—one is that all the kings were highly enlightened and self-realised so much so that they were aware of the metaphysical and spiritual fact that the physical gross body was not their true identity, as their true 'self' was the Atma, the soul which lived inside this body as pure consciousness. They did their duties in a dispassionate and detached manner, remained absorbed in meditation and contemplation, and never indulged in gratification of the sense organs of the body. For all practical purposes therefore, the physical gross body mattered not at all for these enlightened kings, hence the name 'Videha'—one without a body, or one without the awareness of the existence of the physical body.

Another reason of they being called 'Videha' is that their fore-father, king Nimi, was not born in the normal biological process of a union between a male and a female, but as a result of churning of the body of a dead king. In other words, his birth was from a non-living entity, and therefore was deemed as a mystical product created by the sages and seers by merely observing some formality of churning of the dead body of king Nimi, for where has anyone ever seen the birth of a living being from a dead body!

The story of Sita's birth is equally interesting. Janak had no heirs. He was advised by sages to perform a fire-sacrifice. While the ground was being prepared for the altar of the sacred fire, the head of the plough got stuck into a pot buried in the ground. When it was taken out, it was discovered that it contained an infant girl. In the beginning the king thought that this was a bad omen, but his royal priest and other sages who had assembled there advised him that this girl would give him immense fame and a chance to meet the Supreme Lord. Since this lovely girl was discovered when the ploughshare got stuck in the ground, she was named 'Sita'—meaning precisely this, the 'tip or edge of the ploughshare'.

Again, since Sita was born from the Mother Earth, she was also regarded as the daughter of Prithivi (earth). Earth is regarded as the foot of the Viraat Purush, the macrocosmic all-encompassing vast form of the Supreme Being. This is why Laxmi, whose incarnation was Sita, is invariably depicted to be seated near the feet of Lord Vishnu, another name of the Viraat Purush. It was this Lord Vishnu who had manifested himself as Lord Ram of Ayodhya to whom Sita was married. This is natural to expect because Laxmi is the eternal divine consort of Vishnu.

The lineage of the kings of the Janakpur dynasty is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Canto 71. The story related to how Sita was born is narrated in Adbhut Ramayan (purported to have been written also by Valmiki), Canto 8, verse nos. 36-44. This latter book's full English version has been published by this author separately.]

भयउ न होइहि है न जनक सम नरवइ ।
 सीय सुता भइ जासु सकल मंगलमइ ।। 7 ।।
 नृप लखि कुँअरि सयानि बोलि गुर परिजन ।
 करि मत रच्यौ स्वयंबर सिव धनु धरि पन ।। 8 ।।

bhaya'u na hō'ihi hai na janaka sama narava'i.
 sīya sutā bha'i jāsu sakala maṅgalama'i. 7.
 nrpa lakhi kumāri sayāni bōli gura parijana.
 kari mata racyau svayambara siva dhanu dhari pana. 8.

7-8. There has not been a king like Janak in the past, there is none at present, and there shall be none in the times to come. His daughter was Sita who was a personified form of all auspiciousness, and a herald of all good fortunes. (7)

Seeing that the princess has come of age, the king summoned his Guru (named Shataa-nand) and other family members and discussed with them about the prospects of her marriage. They unanimously decided to hold a 'Swayambar' with Lord Shiva's bow as the pivot on which the decision of who will marry Sita would rest. [That is, Shiva's formidable bow was made the condition of marriage of Sita, and it was decided that anybody who strings the bow shall marry the princess¹.] (8)

[Note--¹This decision is narrated in Ram Charit Manas of Tulsidas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 1-3 which reiterates the same vow of Janak.]

पनु धरेउ सिव धनु रचि स्वयंबर अति रुचिर रचना बनी ।
 जनु प्रगटि चतुरानन देखाई चतुरता सब अपनी ।।

पुनि देस देस सँदेस पठयउ भूप सुनि सुख पावहीं ।
सब साजि साजि समाज राजा जनक नगरहि आवहीं ॥१॥

chanda:

panu dharē'u siva dhanu raci svayambara ati rucira racanā banī.
janu pragaṭi caturānana dēkhā'i caturatā saba apanī.
puni dēsa dēsa sam'dēsa paṭhaya'u bhūpa suni sukha pāvahīm.
saba sāji sāji samāja rājā janaka nagarahīm āvahīm. 1.

Chanda 1. The king (Janak) organized the Swayambar with the stringing of Lord Shiva's bow as the central theme (or the pre-condition set for the marriage of Sita). That bow was extremely magnificent to behold, and it appeared as if the creator Brahma had used it as a showpiece-sample to exhibit all the expertise in master craftsmanship that he possessed.

Then message (invitation) was sent to all the countries to invite their rulers to attend the ceremony to be held at Janakpur.

Hearing this news, all the countless great kings and princes of the world felt glad, and they arrived at Janakpur with all their royal regalia, pomp and pageantry, resplendent with the best of regal paraphernalia that each of them possessed. (Chanda 1)

रूप सील बय बंस बिरुद बल दल भले ।
मनहुँ पुरंदर निकर उतरि अवनिहिं चले ॥९॥
दानव देव निसाचर किंनर अहिगन ।
सुनि धरि-धरि नृप बेष चले प्रमुदित मन ॥१०॥

rūpa sīla baya bansa biruda bala dala bhalē.
manahum' purandara nikara utari avanihiṃ calē. 9.
dānava dēva nisācara kinnara ahigana.
suni dhari-dhari nrpa bēṣa calē pramudita mana. 10.

9-10. All of the kings groomed (i.e. prepared) themselves well before departure from their respective kingdoms. They were handsome, virtuous, of the proper age, of a high pedigree and of a noble clan, and were strong and accomplished. When they arrived in Janakpur with full pomp and pageantry, they were all in their finest of royal regalia and were accompanied by their royal armies. It looked then that whole court of Indra (the king of Gods) has come down (descended) on earth (to attend and witness the marriage ceremony of Sita, who was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi). (9)

Even the Danavas (demons), the Gods, the Nisaachars (phantoms and ghosts who walk in the night; the ogres and the hobgoblins), the Kinnars (celestial singers and dancers), and Ahigans (the legendary serpents representing the inhabitants of the subterranean world)—all of them assumed a human form of a king on hearing of the Swayambar, and cheerfully proceeded to Janakpur to attend and witness the magnificent event. (10)

[Note—Refer also Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 252 where king Janak has himself acknowledged this fact that all the great

kings of many continents have arrived to attend and try their luck in the Swayambar of Sita. Even the Gods and Demons had arrived there in the form of human beings.]

एक चलहिं एक बीच एक पुर पैठहिं ।
 एक धरहिं धनु धाय नाइ सिरु बैठहिं ।।11।।
 रंग भूमि पुर कौतुक एक निहारहिं ।
 ललकि सुभाहिं नयन मन फेरि न पावहिं ।।12।।

ēka calahim̐ ēka bīca ēka pura paiṭhahim̐.

ēka dharahim̐ dhanu dhāya nā'i siru baiṭhahim̐. 11.

raṅga bhūmi pura kautuka ēka nihārahim̐.

lalaki subhāhim̐ nayana mana phēri na pāvahim̐. 12.

11-12. Some of them (the kings and princes) are ready for departure¹ (for Janakpur). Some are on their way, some have already arrived and are entering the city, while still others rush at the sight of the bow to snatch it up (before others could try their hands at it because they want to grab the first opportunity), and being unable to lift it up, they sit down on their seats most dejected, crestfallen and full of shame². (11)

Some of them go around the city cheerfully for sightseeing, and glance at the decorations of the city as well as that of the 'Rang Bhumi'—i.e. the arena of the bow-breaking ceremony. They appear virtuous by their demeanours³, and are so enthralled by the charming sights of the city that they could not wean away or divert their mind and eyes from its splendour, grandeur, magnificence and charm⁴. (12)

[Note—¹It is a regular practice with Tulsidas that he employs the present tense in his narratives. His idea is that he is virtually seeing the events unfolding before his mental eyes, and is witnessing them first hand as they happen. He is a scribe who simply narrates what he witnesses happening, neither adding nor subtracting anything on his part. It must be noted that Tulsidas was not an ordinary poet exhibiting his poetic skills; his writings were inspired by the Lord himself, and therefore the Lord had indeed given him the divine spiritual vision to see what had actually happened long long ago.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251.

³Not all the kings had come to compete in the bow-breaking ceremony. Some of them were very noble and virtuous, and they maintained their dignity by not even attempting to go near the dais where the big bow was kept. On the other hand, they even tried to pacify other kings who were trying to create a ruckus after their failure at lifting the bow.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 8 that precede Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; and (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 285

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 218—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 225 where Lord Ram and his brother Laxman go round the city of Janakpur and are enthralled by its beauty and charm, and in turn they captivate the citizens by their own beauty and charm.

(ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Doha no. 289.

(iii) Doha no. 289 and Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

जनकहि एक सिहाहिं देखि सनमानत ।
 बाहर भीतर भीर न बनै बखानत ।।13।।
 गान निसान कोलाहल कौतुक जहँ तहँ ।
 सीय—बिबाह उछाह जाइ कहि का पहँ ।।14।।

janakahi ēka sihāhiṁ dēkhi sanamānata.
 bāhara bhītara bhīra na banai bakhānata. 13.
 gāna nisāna kōlāhala kautuka jaham̐ taham̐.
 sīya-bibāha uchāha jā'i kahi kā paham̐. 14.

13-14. Some of the assembled kings feel jealous of those kings who they observe are being welcomed by king Janak, and at the same time they envy the majesty, wealth and grandeur of Janak¹ as well as the finesse with which he deals with all of them. They resent the way the newly arrived kings and princes are being shown respect by Janak according to their status (because some of these egoistic and haughty kings think that no other king is greater than them in this world).

[There were some proud kings who were full of vanity and haughtiness. They would not tolerate that some other king should be shown respect in their presence. This made them look and feel inferior to others in front of their attendants, something that they were not willing to digest.

Besides this, they were also jealous of the wealth of their host, king Janak, because they watched him liberally spending wealth, without hesitation or limit, in the welcoming ceremony of countless monarchs. They were already in awe at Janak's material prosperity and the wealth of the kingdom, and this awe turned into an exacerbated sense of jealousy and envy when they saw that other kings were given liberal gifts which could have been theirs in the first place if these kings had not come. They grumbled, 'why did Janak not give this or that gift to me, and why did he think I did not deserve some precious gift that he gave to that other king?' And so on and so forth

There was another reason for their exacerbated sense of jealousy and envy. They felt that the more people assembled to compete to break the bow, the chances of their getting an opportunity to try their strength and luck would be correspondingly less because of the crowd and its accompanying melee, and the corresponding necessity to stand in a queue. They loathed this idea—because, after all, one king at a time could be allowed to try his luck, and the first one to successfully lift and string the bow would get to marry Sita, the trophy of the competition, while others behind the successful candidate would be left in the lurch. This would be too grave an insult for those who could not even try. All these factors created a lot of resentment and grumbling amongst the assembled kings and princes.]

Presently, there is such a huge jostling, surging crowd (of kings and princes and their attendants, as well as the excited citizens of Janakpur), both inside and outside of the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony, in the city, in the palace grounds, and even outside the city, that it is impossible for anyone to describe the occasion. Everywhere there is an atmosphere of festivity, celebration and joy. There is a loud cacophony of songs and beating of drums to add to the festivities².

Well say (wonders Tulsidas), who can ever describe the all-permeating sense of joy and exhilaration that marked the festive atmosphere that prevailed at Janakpur on the auspicious occasion of Sita's marriage? (13-14)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Doha no. 289 and its previous Chaupai line nos. 6-8.

(ii) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 314

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263;

(ii) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 265;

(iii) Doha no. 285—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 286.

(iv) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 313.

(v) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 323.

(vi) Doha no. 324.]

Sage Vishwamitra asks Dasrath to lend him Lord Ram

गाधि सुवन तेहि अवसर अवध सिधायउ ।
नृपति कीन्ह सनमान भवन लै आयउ ॥15॥
पूजि पहुनई कीन्ह पाइ प्रिय पाहुन ।
कहेउ भूप मोहि सरिस सुकृत किए काहु न ॥16॥

gādhī suvana tēhi avasara avadha sidhāya'u.
nr̥pati kīnha sanamāna bhavana lai āya'u. 15.
pūji pahuna'ī kīnha pā'i priya pāhuna.
kahē'u bhūpa mōhi sarisa sukr̥ta ki'ē kāhu na. 16.

15-16. About that time, sage Vishwamitra went to Ayodhya. The king (Dasrath) showed great respect to him, and brought him home to his palace. (15)

The king was extremely pleased to have such an exalted sage as his honoured guest, and so he made all efforts to duly welcome the sage, making him feel most comfortable and at home. The king expressed his immense pleasure by saying—‘Oh sage, I am very privileged and honoured to welcome you and have you as my honoured guest. It appears that no one has done so many good and virtuous deeds as me¹ because I it is me who has been given the honour of having an exalted sage like you as my guest.’ (16)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated by Tulsidas in detail in his epic Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 206—to Doha and Sortha no. 208.

It is also described extensively in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 47-56.

Briefly the story goes that sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice was continuously defiled by the demons who threw muck and poured blood on the sacred fire. Frustrated, the sage meditated and had a divine vision of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, having taken birth for the precise reason of eliminating the cruel demons. So the sage decided to go and bring the Lord to initiate this process. He went to Ayodhya, the capital of the kingdom of Avadh, and requested king Dasrath, the worldly father of Lord Ram, to send Ram and his younger brother Laxman with him so that the tyranny of the demons could be effectively dealt with. The king was initially reluctant because he forgot, in his

worldly love for the Lord, that he was not an ordinary human being but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, and that the main purpose of the Lord descending on this earth was to rid it from the torment of ferocious demons. His royal priest, sage Vashistha, however saw the dilemma that the king was in, and so he took him into confidence and told him that he need not fear for the safety of the two brothers, and that they were very safe in the hands of the great sage who had immense mystical powers to afford them full protection. Vashistha assured Dasrath that Ram and Laxman were safer in the company of sage Vishwamitra than they would be with their own father. Besides this, the time had come when the Lord must step out of his protected cocoon and prove his mantle, abilities, strength and prowess to the world. And there was no better and safer opportunity to do this than in the overall protection of the great sage Vishwamitra. So Dasrath agreed and sent the two brothers with the sage.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, 2nd half of Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 310 that says “the auspicious deeds of Dasrath have made Lord Ram (the Supreme Being, Lord Vishnu) assume a body (of a human being)”.]

काहूँ न कीन्हेउ सुकृत सुनि मुनि मुदित नृपहि बखानहीं ।
महिपाल मुनि को मिलन सुख महिपाल मुनि मन जानहीं ।।
अनुराग भाग सोहाग सील सरूप बहु भूषन भरीं ।
हिय हरषि सुतन्ह समेत रानीं आइ रिषि पायन्ह परीं ।।2।।

chanda:

kāhūṁ'na kīnhē'u sukr̥ta suni muni mudita nṛpahi bakhānahīm.
mahipāla muni kō milana sukha mahipāla muni mana jānahīm.
anurāga bhāga sōhāga sīla sarūpa bahu bhūṣana bharīm.
hiya haraṣi sutanha samēta rānīm ā'i riṣi pāyanha parīm. 2.

Chanda 2. The king observed cheerfully, ‘No one has done good and virtuous deeds as I have done, and no one is as fortunate as I am—because today, a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra has come on his own to my place to pay a visit, and make me blessed and fortunate in every way.’

Hearing these pleasurable words of the king, the sage reciprocated by honouring and blessing the king (that he is the most fortunate person in the whole world because he has the rare privilege of having the Lord of the world as his son, Lord Ram)¹. The joy and pleasure of meeting each other were known only to the king’s and the sage’s hearts; no one else could fathom it.

The queens—who were well endowed with luck, good fortunes, virtues and beauty, and were bedecked with numerous ornaments befitting great queens—came with their sons (Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan), and affectionately fell at the feet of the sage (as a mark of respect, and to seek his blessings). (Chanda 2)

[Note—¹This is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas as well. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 294 where sage Vashistha has praised king Dasrath in the same way, saying—“There is no one who has done auspicious deeds like you have in this world—neither was there anyone in the past, nor is there anyone in the present, or anyone would be in the future. Say, who can be said to have done more virtuous deeds that are

greater than the ones you have done, oh king, for you have Lord Ram as your son (a feat that is not possible unless one has done exceptionally high quality deeds, and is equally, exceptionally, fortunate and lucky)”.]

कौसिक दीन्हि असीस सकल प्रमुदित भई ।
सींचीं मनहुँ सुधा रस कलप लता नई ॥17॥
रामहि भाइन्ह सहित जबहिं मुनि जोहेउ ।
नैन नीर तन पुलक रूप मन मोहेउ ॥18॥

kausika dīnhi asīsa sakala pramudita bha'ī.
sīñcīm manahum' sudhā rasa kalapa latā na'īm. 17.
rāmahi bhā'inha sahita jabahim muni jōhē'u.
naina nīra tana pulaka rūpa mana mōhē'u. 18.

17-18. Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) blessed them. They (the queens) felt extremely delighted as if the sage had watered tender creepers of the Kalpa Tree (the evergreen tree of the Gods) with the water of Amrit (the elixir of life and the ambrosia that gives eternal peace, bliss and happiness). (17)

When the sage saw Lord Sri Ram along with his brothers, tears (of profound love and surging affection) welled up in his eyes; his body was extremely thrilled, and his heart and mind (the 'Mana') were enamoured and held in thrall by their beauty. (18)

[Note—(i) There is an interesting episode mentioned in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 17, stanza no. 5 that would explain why the mothers were excited and happy when they came to meet sage Vishwamitra and made their sons (Lord Ram and others) bow before the sage to seek his blessings. They had a recollection of an earlier episode during the first few days after the birth of the four brothers when a fortune-teller had come and had examined the palms of the children to forecast their future. At that time he had said that one day sage Vishwamitra would come and he would take Ram away with him on the pretext of having his fire sacrifice protected by Lord Ram, but the real reason would be to get him married to Sita. He had also predicted about the future happiness, the immense fame and the stupendous glory of the four children.

So when the great sage Vishwamitra actually came for a visit, it was natural for the mothers to become very excited and happy.

(ii) Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 207.

The difference between these two versions of the sage meeting Lord Ram and his brothers and becoming overwhelmed with love and affection for the Lord, i.e. the present one as narrated in our current book 'Janki Mangal' and 'Ram Charit Manas', is that in Janki Mangal it is the mothers who bring the sons to bow before the sage, while in Ram Charit Manas it is king Dasrath who does it.]

परसि कमल कर सीस हरषि हियँ लावहिं ।
प्रेम पयोधि मगन मुनि पार न पावहिं ॥19॥
मधुर मनोहर मूरति सादर चाहहिं ।
बार बार दसरथके सुकृत सराहहिं ॥20॥

parasi kamala kara sīsa haraṣi hiyaṁ lāvahiṁ.
 prēma payōdhi magana muni pāra na pāvahiṁ. 19.
 madhura manōhara mūrati sādara cāhahiṁ.
 bāra bāra dasarathakē sukr̥ta sarāhahiṁ. 20.

19-20. He (Vishwamitra) touched the head of Lord Sri Ram with his lotus-like hands, and overwhelmed with exhilaration and joy he embraced the Lord, clasping him to his heart. The sage got so ecstatic that he virtually immersed himself in an ocean of love and affection for the Lord. [This symbolic ocean was so deep, dense and heaving that the sage got virtually drowned in its surging waves; he was unable to fathom it. The burst of exhilaration and ecstasy was so profound and intense that he could not stand against its blast and got numbed. The sage forgot about the surroundings, and his condition was like a hermit who has attained the state of transcendental existence that is possible in the higher stages of meditation, the stage known as Samadhi when the person loses awareness of even his own body, and is overcome with ecstasy and bliss of the highest order.] (19)

He reverentially observed Lord Ram's pleasant and enchanting image, and repeatedly praised the king's good fortunes and privilege (that he could see the enchanting form of the Supreme Being at so close quarters, he could play with the Lord and shower his love on him, a feat that even the greatest of sages and seers longed for but could not achieve). (20)

[Note—In Ram Charit Manas there are other instances also when renowned sages had become overwhelmed with love and affection when they met Lord Ram. Refer:--

- (i) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 106—to Doha no. 108 when the Lord met sage Bharadwaj;
- (ii) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 125 when the Lord met sage Valmiki;
- (iii) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 3 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 when the Lord met sage Atri;
- (iv) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 10 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 20-24 when the Lord met sage Sutikshan;
- (v) Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-13 that precede Doha no. 12 when the Lord met sage Agastya.]

राउ कहेउ कर जोर सुबचन सुहावन ।
 भयउ कृतार्थ आजु देखि पद पावन ॥ 21 ॥
 तुम्ह प्रभु पूरन काम चारि फलदायक ।
 तेहिं तें बूझत काजु डरौं मुनिनायक ॥ 22 ॥

rā'u kahē'u kara jōra subacana suhāvana.
 bhaya'u kṛtāratha āju dēkhi pada pāvana. 21.
 tumha prabhu pūrana kāma cāri phaladāyaka.
 tēhiṁ tēm būjhata kāju ḍarauriṁ munināyaka. 22.

21-22. Then the king showed his reverence and sense of gratitude for the sage by bringing together his hands so that their palms touched each other. [This is a traditional method of showing respect to others.]

The king told the sage in a sweet and pleasing voice, ‘Revered sage! I have become privileged and feel honoured at having seen your holy feet. (21)

Oh Lord! You are ever-contented—i.e. you do not desire anything for yourself, and neither do you expect anyone to serve you in anyway. You also possess the mystical power that can bestow all the four legendary fruits (rewards) upon those whom you bless. [These four great fruits or rewards are the following—‘Artha’ or material wealth and prosperity; ‘Dharma’ or success in following the path of righteousness, probity and propriety; ‘Kaam’ or fulfillment of all desires; and ‘Moksha’ or attainment of emancipation and salvation for the soul.]

That is why I (Dasrath) feel hesitant and shy to ask you for any service that I can do for you.’

[Dasrath feels hesitant because of two reasons—one is that the sage does not want himself to be obliged to anyone by accepting any thing or service from the other person, and second, the sage is himself empowered to grant the wishes of others, and therefore it is deemed that he can provide his own self with whatever he needs, thereby eliminating the need for others to give him anything at all.] (22)

कौसिक सुनि नृप बचन सराहेउ राजहि ।
धर्म कथा कहि कहेउ गयउ जेहि काजहि ।।23 ।।
जबहिं मुनीस महीसहि काजु सुनायउ ।
भयउ सनेह सत्य बस उतरु न आयउ ।।24 ।।

kausika suni nrpa bacana sarāhē'u rājahi.
dharma kathā kahi kahē'u gaya'u jēhi kājahi. 23.
jabahim munīsa mahīsahi kāju sunāya'u.
bhaya'u sanēha satya basa utaru na āya'u. 24.

23-24. Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra) heard these sweet and humble words of the king and lauded him (for his humility, modesty and simplicity). He narrated or cited some episodes pertaining to Dharma (i.e. to the laws of righteousness, probity, propriety, noble conduct, morality and ethics) and then told him the purpose of his visit¹. (23)

When the sage finally disclosed his purpose of visit to the king², the latter was stunned and dumbfounded beyond measure. He was virtually in a stupor, not being able to utter a word of answer, either yes or no. He was literally torn between two extreme emotions and was dangling on the horns of a great and unprecedented dilemma—because on the one hand there was the intense pull of the bond of love that he had for his sons (Ram and Laxman), and on the other hand there was the demand of righteous duty and the need to adhere to the principles of a true upholder of Dharma that was expected from such a great king as he who was renowned the world over precisely for this virtue³. (24)

[Note—¹The intention of the sage in narrating such episodes is to mentally prepare the king for what was to come. The sage wished to take Lord Ram with him for the protection of Dharma which the ruthless demons had been trampling underfoot relentlessly. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 8 that

precedes Doha no. 181; (ii) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 183—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 184.

But the wise sage knew that the king was so overcome with worldly delusions that he has forgotten who Ram actually was, and what his divine mission on earth was, so it was certain that the king would be most reluctant to let Ram go with him. This is actually what happened—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 208 where the king has flatly denied that he will allow Ram and Laxman to go with the sage.

Therefore, in order to pre-empt stubborn and outright refusal by the king to allow Lord Ram to go with Vishwamitra after some obvious initial phase of reluctance or hesitation, the sage had told him about ancient kings and sages who had made great personal sacrifices to protect and uphold Dharma.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 49-50, it is described how Vishwamitra politely pleaded with king Dasrath to send Ram and Laxman with him.

²Though not mentioned in these verses expressly, the purpose of sage Vishwamitra's visit was to ask Dasrath to lend him Sri Ram and Laxman so that they could protect his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 207 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 50.

³The king loved all his sons, especially Lord Ram, more than his own life, and to part with Ram was like pulling the heart out of the body. When he heard what the sage wanted, i.e. permission to take Ram and Laxman with him to the dense forest to fight the fierce demons, the king was so terrified that he shook and his lips quivered in utter shock and disbelief. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 208; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 51.

Dasrath did not mince words in flatly telling sage Vishwamitra that he cannot allow Ram to go to the forest with him to face the ruthlessly cruel demons. He is, on the other hand, ready to lay down his life, give the whole kingdom, give as much land, cows, wealth and everything else that he possessed to the sage in lieu of sending Ram and Laxman, but the latter option is certainly not open.

But then, inspite of this initial round of outburst of denial and refusal, the great king had second thoughts. This is where the tactic of Vishwamitra worked. As has been already stated in verse no. 22 above, the sage had already brain-washed him about the need to adhere to the principles of Dharma, and the need to make sacrifices so that Dharma is upheld by telling him many ancient stories of great kings and sages who followed this sacrosanct law to attain liberation and deliverance as well as acquire immense fame, auspiciousness and goodwill.

So, Dasrath feared that if he denied the sage what he wanted—especially when the sage's requests are not for any personal gain such as land, money or other pecuniary benefits, but for the protection of the fire sacrifice and killing of the demons who are tormenting the people of the world—then it would be a grave and an unpardonable sin on the part of Dasrath because it is the moral duty of a great king that anyone who torments his subjects must be brought to book, and by creating an obstacle in fulfillment of this divine duty the concerned king would be committing an horrendous sin.

Therefore, by denying this opportunity to sage Vishwamitra to get rid of the cruel demons and protect his fire sacrifice just because he loves his son Ram too much to let him go with the sage to fulfill his royal duties of a prince—which ordain that a righteous prince must do whatever he can to afford protection to sages and fire sacrifices as well as punish those who make his subjects miserable, such as being done by the demons—the king would invite the wrath of Natural Justice of the Lord God which spares none, and this natural process of punishment and spiritual retribution which such selfish action

would entail in its wake would not be good either for himself nor for the sons who he is trying to protect from facing the wrath of the cruel demons, nor for the kingdom as a whole. In other words, refusing to meet the requests of the sage would invite great horrors for the whole kingdom and the royal family itself.

So, the king was thrown in a whirlpool of dilemma—one moment stoutly denying permission to let Ram go to the forest out of paternal love for his beloved son, and in the other moment thinking that he must let Ram go with the sage because it was his moral duty as a righteous king who has always upheld the laws of Dharma.]

आयउ न उतरु बसिष्ठ लखि बहु भाँति नृप समझायऊ ।
कहि गाधिसुत तप तेज कछु रघुपति प्रभाउ जनायऊ ।।
धीरज धरेउ सुर बचन सुनि कर जोरि कह कोसल धनी ।
करुना निधान सुजान प्रभु सो उचित नहिं बिनती घनी ।।३।।

chanda:

āya'u na utaru basiṣṭha lakhi bahu bhām̐ti nṛpa samajhāya'ū.
kahi gādhisuta tapa tēja kachu raghupati prabhā'u janāya'ū.
dhīraja dharē'u sura bacana suni kara jōri kaha kōsala dhanī.
karunā nidhāna sujāna prabhu sō ucita nahim̐ binatī ghanī. 3.

Chanda 3. [The context of this Chanda: Sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice was being defiled by the demons. He went to Ayodhya and asked its king Dasrath to send his sons Lord Ram and Laxman with the sage to kill these demons so that the fire sacrifice could be completed successfully. The king was very reluctant to agree, but his chief royal priest, sage Vashistha persuaded him to agree with Vishwamitra.]

Observing that the king is unable to give a positive, decisive answer to the requests of sage Vishwamitra (as he was dangling on the horns of a dilemma, not being able to decide whether or not to allow Lord Ram to go with the sage), his Guru, sage Vashistha, reasoned with him in various ways (using different logics and arguments to convince the king to send Ram to the forest with the sage, and assuring him of the Lord's absolute safety with Vishwamitra).

[The Guru warned the king of the bad and ominous consequences of denying sage Vishwamitra his wishes. The sage was not asking for any worldly riches or expecting any pecuniary gain. He was seeking the king's help to protect a fire sacrifice and punish the demons who were defiling it, something that was a moral obligation of a great king such as Dasrath who was bound to do everything possible so that this wish—i.e. protection of the fire sacrifice and punishment of its defilers—is fulfilled.

Further, a prince's destiny is not to indulge in sensual pleasures and remain confined to enjoying royal comfort of a palace, but to move out and extend support and protection to the subjects of his kingdom whenever and wherever they are in distress. Failure on both these counts will boomerang on the king and his reputation.

Not only this, by denying sage Vishwamitra his wishes there is a chance that the great sage may curse him, and should this happen there will be no solution. This eventuality would be most horrifying, and it would be far better therefore to play it safe now and concede to the sage's wishes before the worst happens. So, if the king willingly

and cheerfully allows Ram to go with the sage then it would be the sage's responsibility to take care of Ram as well as the future happiness of the king towards whom the sage will morally obliged. In the present situation, this will be the best and the wisest action to be taken by Dasrath.

As for the doubt in the king's mind about the integrity and abilities of sage Vishwamitra, Vashistha vouched on his behalf and assured the king that he need not worry at all about anything as Vishwamitra was a powerful and able sage, and that by conceding to his requests the sage would be obliged to reciprocate to the gesture liberally by doing something that would ensure fabulous good tidings for the whole kingdom. That is why the Guru told the king that Vishwamitra was 'an ocean of mercy and compassion' as reiterated by the king himself when he addressed the latter while agreeing to send Ram and Laxman with the sage.]

On the one hand Vashistha narrated to the king the immaculate reputation and immense glories of sage Vishwamitra (known as 'Gaadhisut', the son of sage Gaadhi), as well as the great mystical powers that he possessed by the virtue of severe Tapa (doing severe penances and austerities) that he did, and on the other hand he told the king about his moral responsibilities along with the secrets of Lord Ram's own greatness and divinity (as a prince who was not an ordinary one, but one who had a divine mission to accomplish in this world, a prince whose stupendous glories and great strength that had lain hidden hitherto needed to be brought out in the open by giving him an opportunity to move out of the comfort and cloistered life of a palace, and into the world to face its harsh realities, to conquer obstacles and to learn to fight for Dharma, and sharpen his skills and prove his mettle while assured of iron-clad safety under the able protection of a mighty sage of the stature of sage Vishwamitra—say, where else would such a golden opportunity come again?).

Hearing the words of prudent advice given by his Guru, the king somehow gathered courage and felt reassured. Then the Lord of Kaushal (i.e. the king of Ayodhya; Dasrath) held his palms together as a gesture of paying respect to sage Vishwamitra, and said to him, 'Oh Lord! You are an ocean of mercy and compassion as well as aware of all the things. Hence, it is not proper to talk much (and argue and discuss the matter further) before you.

[In other words, you are wise and learned, and you know what is good for me as well as for my beloved son Ram. In fact, as a great and able sage, I feel assured of our well-being and safety in your hands. On the other hand, it will not only be unrighteous but also unpardonably sinful to deny a sage of your stature his wish. That would be ruinous for the entire kingdom and bring immense disrepute to its king who prides himself on his reputation as an upholder of Dharma—that this king had denied a great sage his wish to help him eliminate the horrors that cruel demons have unleashed on innocent people of the world family. Therefore it would be a shameful act on my part if I disallowed Ram to go with you just because of filial considerations—me being his father who is worried about his son's safety. Hence, on the wise advice given to me by my learned Guru, sage Vashistha, I have realised that I need not worry about either my welfare or that of my son Ram, and that it is most prudent and wise to let him accompany you to protect your fire sacrifice.]' (3)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8. It speaks of the same thing.

When king Dasrath was hesitant to allow his son Ram to go to the forest to protect the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra and fight the demons, the king's royal priest, sage Vashistha took him aside and reasoned with him. He explained to the king the pros and cons of his decision, and told him that he need not worry about the safety of Ram with Vishwamitra as the sage was amply able to protect him as he possessed immense mystical powers.

A question arises here that if Vishwamitra was so powerful that no harm would befall upon the young princes when he was with them, then why could he not protect his own fire sacrifice? The answer is given in Valmiki's Ramayana where Vishwamitra explained that he could not kill the demons who were defiling his fire sacrifice because he had taken a vow of observing self-restraint, maintain mental calmness and serenity, and not being angry or wrathful on anyone while the sacrifice was in progress. If he punished the demons by cursing them, then it would violate this vow, and the whole exercise would be spoilt.

Refer: (i) Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Sarga/Canto 19, verse nos. 7-20; (ii) Tulsidas' Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 47, stanza nos. 1-2, and verse no. 66, stanza no. 2.]

नाथ मोहि बालकन्ह सहित पुर परिजन ।
 राखनिहार तुम्हार अनुग्रह घर बन ॥25॥
 दीन बचन बहु भाँति भूप मुनि सन कहे ।
 साँपि राम अरु लखन पाय पंकज गहे ॥26॥

nātha mōhi bālakanha sahita pura parijana.
 rākhanihāra tumhāra anugraha ghara bana. 25.
 dīna bacana bahu bhāmṭi bhūpa muni sana kahē.
 saumpi rāma aru lakhana pāya paṅkaja gahē. 26.

25-26. King Dasrath told sage Vishwamitra—‘Oh Lord! It is indeed your grace and blessings that gives all of us—me, the children as well as the subjects of the entire kingdom—protection, whether we live in a city or in the forest.’

[The king was initially afraid of the safety of his sons Ram and Laxman when he opposed sending them to the forest with sage Vishwamitra. But when his royal priest, sage Vashistha, explained everything to him and assured him about the safety of the two princes in the hands of Vishwamitra by enlightening the king about the latter's immense powers, the king finally conceded. This has been narrated above in Chanda no. 3.] (25)

The king said many such words of humility and submission to the sage, then handed over Lord Sri Ram and Laxman to him. The king kneeled down and clasped the sage's lotus-like feet as an act of seeking his protection and a gesture of submission before the great sage. (26)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 208 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 9-10. They speak of the same thing. Here, the king called Ram and Laxman, affectionately embraced them, and made them bow before the sage. Then he handed them over to the sage, saying—“Oh Sage. These two sons are like my Pran (life). You are no one else but like their father. I am handing over them and their responsibility now onwards to you. Take care as you think fit.” Saying this, the king handed over the two princes to sage Vishwamitra.]

पाइ मातु पितु आयसु गुरु पायन्ह परे ।
 कटि निषंग पट पीत करनि सर धनु धरे ॥ 27 ॥
 पुरबासी नृप रानिन्ह संग दिये मन ।
 बेगि फिरेउ करि काजु कुसल रघुनंदन ॥ 28 ॥

pā'i mātu pitu āyasu guru pāyanha parē.
 kaṭi niṣaṅga paṭa pīta karani sara dhanu dharē. 27.
 purabāsī nr̥pa rāninha saṅga diyē mana.
 bēgi phirē'u kari kāju kusala raghunandana. 28.

27-28. At the instructions of their father as well as their mother, they (Lord Sri Ram and Laxman) fell at the feet of the Guru (i.e. sage Vashistha) to pay their respects to the great sage. The two brothers had a quiver and Pitambar (a silk seamless golden-coloured cloth) tied around their waists, and they held a bow and an arrow in their hands¹. (27)

The citizens, the king and the queens were extremely sad at the moment Ram and Laxman were preparing to go with sage Vishwamitra. They became overwhelmed with emotions and literally sent their hearts and minds along with Raghunandan (i.e. the son of the Raghu's clan, Lord Sri Ram) as he went out to accompany the sage to the forest, by saying—‘Oh our beloved Raghunandan! Once you have finished the designated work of the sage (Vishwamitra), please come back immediately. [Remember this—the time that we have to spend without you will be most burdensome for us, and it is impossible for us to live without you in our midst for a long time. So, do come back as soon as possible.²’]’ (28)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 209 that say—“The Lord (Ram) has large lotus-like red/pink eyes; his chest is broad; and his arms are large and long. His complexion is dark like the blue lotus flower or the dark shade of the catechu plant. He has Pitambar and a beautiful quiver (to hold arrows) tied to his waist. He holds a magnificent bow and an arrow in his hands. The great sage Vishwamitra was indeed very fortunate to have acquired the company of the two brothers (Ram and Laxman) having a dark and fair complexion respectively, and who are exceptionally beautiful to behold.”

²Lord Ram was extremely dear not only to his parents but also to the citizens of Ayodhya in equal terms. This is clear when the Lord was heading to his 14-year forest exile as narrated in Ram Charit Manas. In its Ayodhya Kand there is an extensive narration of how the grieving citizens ran after the chariot which was taking the Lord away from the city—refer: Ayodhya Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 81; (ii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 84—to Doha no. 86; and (iii) Doha no. 118.

Once again, when Bharat was returning from Chitrakoot with Lord Ram's sandal, an overwhelming sense of gloom, dejection, despair and dismay spread over all the people like a thick blanket as they walked silently back home in a state of numbness and complete stupor. Even after their return to Ayodhya they lived a life of pain, misery and grief, ever lost in the memory of their beloved Lord, and waiting for the time when the Lord will finally come back to inject cheer and happiness in their lives once again—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 322 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.]

ईस मनाइ असीसहिं जय जसु पावहु ।
 न्हात खसै जनि बार गहरु जनि लावहु ।।29।।
 चलत सकल पुर लोग बियोग बिकल भए ।
 सानुज भरत सप्रेम राम पायन्ह नए ।।30।।

īsa manā'i asīsaḥim̐ jaya jasu pāvahu.
 nhāta khasai jani bāra gaharu jani lāvahu. 29.
 calata sakala pura lōga biyōga bikala bha'ē.
 sānuja bharata saprēma rāma pāyanha na'ē. 30.

29-30. All of them (i.e. the parents, the Guru, and the citizens of Ayodhya) invoked their patron God (i.e. Lord Shiva) and blessed Sri Ram and Laxman, saying, 'You should achieve victory and fame. Let not a single hair of your head fall while you bathe (i.e. let not a single hair of yours be harmed; let Lord Shiva give you absolute protection). And look, don't delay in coming back (as soon as the work of securing sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice is completed).' (29)

At the time of their (Ram and Laxman's) departure, all the residents of the city were overwhelmed with anguish and grief that comes with separation from someone whom one loves very dearly. Bharat and his younger brother (Shatrughan) bowed at the feet of Sri Ram as a mark of respect and farewell. (30)

होहिं सकुल सुभ मंगल जनु कहि दीन्हैउ ।
 राम लखन मुनि साथ गवन तब कीन्हैउ ।।31।।
 स्यामल गौर किसोर मनोहरता निधि ।
 सुषमा सकल सकेलि मनहुँ बिरचे बिधि ।।32।।

hōhim̐ sakula subha maṅgala janu kahi dīnhē'u.
 rāma lakhana muni sātha gavana taba kīnhē'u. 31.
 syāmala gaura kisōra manōharatā nidhi.
 suṣamā sakala sakēli manahum̐ biracē bidhi. 32.

31-32. At that time, many different good signs began to appear as if to forecast an auspicious future. Then Sri Ram and Laxman left with sage Vishwamitra (for his hermitage in the forest to protect his fire sacrifice). (31)

They were respectively of a dark and fair complexion (i.e. Lord Ram was dark, and his younger brother Laxman was fair complexioned), were in their teens, and both of them appeared to be a treasury of charm, magnificence and beauty, enchanting the mind the heart of all those who beheld them. It looked as if the creator Brahma has created them out of all the beauty, majesty, charm, magnificence and grandeur that ever existed in the world. [In other words, the beauty, the charm, the magnificence and the glamour of the two brothers was matchless, and it seemed that the creator has extracted the best of everything that was beautiful, magnificence, charming and glamorous to create these two young brothers, Ram and Laxman.]¹ (32)

[Note—¹The exceptionally beautiful sight of Lord Ram and Laxman going to the forest alongside sage Vishwamitra has been extensively described by Tulsidas in his book 'Geetawali', Baal Kand, verse nos. 52—56. It makes a very fascinating reading, and since it is not practical to include these verses here, the reader is advised to look up my English version of Geetawali which has been published separately.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Doha no. 209.]

बिरचे बिरंचि बनाइ बाँची रुचिरता रंचौ नहीं।
 दस चारि भुवन निहारि देखि बिचारि नहिं उपमा कहीं॥
 रिषि संग सोहत जात मग छबि बसत सो तुलसी हिउँ।
 कियो गवन जनु दिननाथ उत्तर संग मधु माधव लिउँ॥4॥

chanda:

biracē biran̄ci banā'i bām̄cī ruciratā rañcai nahīm.
 dasa cāri bhuvana nihāri dēkhi bicāri nahīm upamā kahīm.
 riṣi saṅga sōhata jāta maga chabi basata sō tulasī hi'ēm̄.
 kiyō gavana janu dinanātha utara saṅga madhu mādhave li'ēm̄. 4.

Chanda 4. The creator Brahma had created them so meticulously and immaculately beautiful that it appears no beauty, charm and magnificence remained as a residue after their creation (i.e. all such good qualities of the world were exhausted in moulding or crafting the bewitching forms of Lord Ram and Laxman).

We have searched and looked around very carefully in all the 14 Bhuvans (territories, segments, parts and areas of the universe created by Brahma) but there is nothing to compare them with. They look very magnificent and charming while on their way alongside the sage (Vishwamitra).

This (stupendously charming) image of them (Ram and Laxman) has enshrined itself in the heart of Tulsidas. The sight reminds one of the Sun migrating towards the north of the equinox along with Madhu (i.e. the month of Chaitra or mid March-April) and Maadhav (i.e. May-June)¹. (Chanda 4)

[Note—¹Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 51, 2nd line of stanza no. 3 that also states the same thing.

In the present Chanda, sage Vishwamitra is the Sun, Sri Ram is Madhu, and Laxman is Maadhav. This is a metaphor that refers to the winter solistice when the sun migrates to the north of the celestial equator. The sage is compared to the 'Sun' because he is radiant with the positive aura that surrounds him due the intense Tapa (penances and austerities) that he had done. Ram and Laxman have been compared to Madhu and Maadhav in this verse.

This comparison is very interesting. The sun is at its brightest best during the summer months that are at their peak during May and June. Before that, during the earlier months of March and April, the chill and grey of winter has ended and spring has brought cheer and colour to the countryside. Hence, though sage Vishwamitra's Tapa had bestowed him with a divine glow, it was made more brilliant when Lord Ram and Laxman accompanied him. Lord Ram is like the spring season that brings cheer all around, when new leaves sprout on trees and there is colour and greenery everywhere. Laxman is a brave warrior,

and he is as strong and unbearable as the heat of the vicious summer months. It is during this period of the year that the sun appears at its brightest glory. After that, the rainy season sets in and the sun gets hidden behind clouds.

In other words, when sage Vishwamitra walked along with Ram and Laxman, his excitement and exhilaration knew no bounds, and this reflected in his demeanours and countenance—he bore a perpetually infective smile, his face glowed, and the happiness of having the company of the Supreme Being in a physical form was enough to charge the sage with an immense surge of dynamic spiritual energy that bubbled over and spilled all around him.]

गिर तरु बेलि सरित सर बिपुल बिलोकहिं ।
धावहिं बाल सुभाय बिहग मृग रोकहिं ।।33 ।।
सकुचहिं मुनिहि सभित बहुरि फिरि आवहिं ।
तोरि फूल फल किसलय माल बनावहिं ।।34 ।।

gira taru bēli sarita sara bipula bilōkahim.
dhāvahim bāla subhāya bihaga mṛga rōkahim. 33.
sakucahim munihi sabhita bahuri phiri āvahim.
tōri phūla phala kisalaya māla banāvahim. 34.

33-34. They (the two brothers) excitedly look at different mountains, hills, trees, creepers, rivers, streams, lakes, ponds etc. while on their way to the sage's hermitage. They run behind and try to stop the birds and deer (or other pleasant and harmless animals) from running away from them in a manner behooving children of their age¹. (33)

Then they get scared of the sage (fearing that he shall be annoyed), and come back to him. Then at other times, they pluck flowers, fruits and leaves, and string a garland out of them. (34)

[Note—Such a wonderful and fascinating imagery! A similar description is found in Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 52, stanza no. 5; (ii) verse no. 54, stanza nos. 3-4; (iii) verse no. 55, stanza no. 5; (iv) verse no. 56, stanza no. 5.

Later on in life, when Lord Ram and Laxman were going to their 14-year exile along with Sita, the Lord had also watched the beautiful scene of the mountains, hills, rivers, trees with their flowers and fruits as he moved ahead in the forest—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

देखि बिनोद प्रमोद प्रेम कौसिक उर ।
करत जाहिं घन छाँह सुमन बरषहिं सुर ।।35 ।।
बधी ताड़का राम जानि सब लायक ।
बिद्या मंत्र रहस्य दिए मुनिनायक ।।36 ।।

dēkhi binōda pramōda prēma kausika ura.
karata jāhim ghana chāmha sumana baraṣahim sura. 35.
badhī tāṛakā rāma jāni saba lāyaka.
bidyā mantra rahasya di'ē munināyaka. 36.

35-36. Watching the joyful and pleasant playful activities (of Sri Ram and Laxman), the heart of the sage gets overwhelmed with delight and joy as well as a surge of love and affection for them¹. The clouds provide shade and the Gods rain flowers on the path². (35)

About that time, Sri Ram slayed (the demoness known as) Taadka³. Seeing the two brothers fully eligible and worthy of being imparted knowledge, the sage gave them the holy Mantra—i.e. revealed to them the formula and secrets of the art and science of weapons and warfare. [He taught the two brothers the secrets of many powerful and invincible weapons, as well as the intricacies and methods to use them during battle, both to attack the enemy as well as for self-defence.]⁴ (36)

[Note—¹Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 52, stanza no. 5; (ii) verse no. 55, stanza no. 7.

²When the Lord walks on the path, the clouds cheerfully and willingly provide shade for him, and the Gods shower flowers to soften the ground below. They feel privileged to have got this opportunity—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Doha no. 113.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 53, stanza no. 3; (ii) verse no. 55, stanza no. 4.

³Taadka was a demoness who attacked the party of Ram, Laxman and Vishwamitra as they were on their way to the hermitage of the sage. Lord Ram killed her with a single arrow when sage Vishwamitra gave him orders—refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 209;

(ii) In Geetawali, Baal Kand, there are numerous references to the killing of Taadka as follows—verse no. 55, stanza no. 6; verse no. 52, stanza no. 6; verse no. 63, stanza no. 4; verse no. 67, stanza no. 2; verse no. 68, stanza no. 3.

⁴Taadka was not an ordinary demoness. It was not easy to kill her. So when Lord Ram killed her with a single arrow, the sage realised finally that Ram was not an ordinary prince, and that he had the potential, the strength, the powers and the prowess to actually defeat the mighty demons and free the earth of their tyranny. So the sage decided to empower the two brothers with skills and knowledge that will help them achieve this noble objective of eliminating the demons. The killing of Taadka was the test that proved to Vishwamitra that Ram was an eligible candidate to whom the secret of mystical weapons must be divulged.

It has been expressly said so in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 209 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8. To quote—“The great sage recognized his Lord. The sage then imparted the mystical knowledge of secret weapons to him (Lord Ram) though the Lord was deemed to have all knowledge, being a personified form of the all-knowing Supreme Being. But nevertheless, to comply with the requirements of his formal form as a human being, the sage observed the formality of giving knowledge to the ‘Lord of all knowledge’. This mystical knowledge empowered the person to be free from thirst and hunger, amongst other things. It gave the holder of this knowledge an incomparably immense strength and dynamic powers; it made his body glow with radiance and splendour as it became infused with dynamic energy of divine proportions. Not only this, the sage surrendered to the Lord all the mystical weapons (i.e. invisible weapons that could be invoked as and when they were needed) that he possessed. That is, the sage told the secret formula by which these invincible and powerful weapons could be invoked and used against one’s opponent.”

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 52, stanza no. 6 it is said that “sage Vishwamitra taught Lord Ram and Laxman the art of archery. With this knowledge, Lord Ram had killed Taadka with a single arrow.”]

मग लोगन्हके करत सुफल मन लोचन ।
 गए कौसिक आश्रमहिं बिप्र भय मोचन ॥ 37 ॥
 मारि निसाचर निकर जग्य करवायउ ।
 अभय किए मुनिबृंद जगत जसु गायउ ॥ 38 ॥

maga lōganhakē karata suphala mana lōcana.
 ga'ē kausika āśramahim bipra bhaya mōcana. 37.
 māri nisācara nikara jagya karavāya'u.
 abhaya ki'ē munibṛnda jagata jasu gāya'u. 38.

37-38. Making the people who lived along the way fully contented in their hearts and minds by the magnificent sight of the two brothers (Ram and Laxman), and making them feel that they have got the full reward of having eyes (as they were able to watch the bewitching beauty of the two brothers as they wended their way through the villages and hamlets along the way to the hermitage of sage Vishwamitra), Lord Ram—who is the vanquisher of the fear of Brahmins—went to the hermitage of Kaushik (sage Vishwamitra). (37)

Then, he (Sri Ram) destroyed (killed) the hordes of demons (who were defiling the fire sacrifice) and helped the sage to complete his fire sacrifice without any hindrance¹, thereby making all the sages, hermits and seers feel reassured and fearless from the scare of the mighty and cruel demons. The whole world erupted in joy as it sang and lauded this great deed of the Lord. (38)

[Note—¹This episode is mentioned in—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 210 where it is stated that amongst the demons killed was Subahu who was scorched with a fire-tipped arrow, and Marich who was spared his life by being flung far off to an island that lay one hundred Yojans away into the ocean. {1 Yojan = 8 miles.}

Refer also to—(a) Geetawali, Baal Kand—(i) verse no. 55, stanza no. 9; (ii) verse no. 56, stanza no. 6; (iii) verse no. 60, stanza nos. 1-3; (iv) verse no. 63, stanza no. 4; (v) verse no. 67, stanza no. 2.

(b) Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 21, stanza no. 1.]

Departure of Sri Ram for Sita's Swayambar

बिप्र साधु सुर काजु महामुनि मन धरि ।
 रामहि चले लिवाइ धनुष मख मिसु करि ॥ 39 ॥
 गौतम नारि उधारि पटै पति धामहि ।
 जनक नगर लै गयउ महामुनि रामहि ॥ 40 ॥

bipra sādhu sura kāju mahāmuni mana dhari.
 rāmahi calē livā'i dhanuṣa makha misu kari. 39.
 gautama nāri udhāri paṭhai pati dhāmahi.
 janaka nagara lai gaya'u mahāmuni rāmahi. 40.

39-40. Thereafter, the great sage (Vishwamitra) embarked on the next phase of his mission, which was to accomplish the task of Brahmins, saints and Gods. [This mission was to make them happy by bringing about a union of Lord Vishnu's human form as Ram with the Lord's eternal cosmic counterpart, goddess Laxmi who had manifested herself as Sita, and pave the way for the ultimate elimination of the cruel demons for which purpose Vishnu had to come to earth in the first place.]

So, with this objective in mind, the sage moved ahead and went on a journey (to Janakpur) to witness the 'Danush Yagya', a ceremony in which the formidable bow of Lord Shiva was to play the central role. He took Ram and Laxman along on the pretext of making them also witness this rare spectacle (and in the process fulfill the wishes of the Brahmins, saints, sages and Gods)¹. (39)

On the way, (by the touch of Sri Ram's divine and holy feet) sage Gautam's wife (Ahilya) was freed (from her curse that had turned her into a rock/stone). Freed from the curse, Ahilya reverted to her divine form and sent back to her husband Gautam². Then the great sage brought Lord Ram to Janak's city (i.e. Janakpur). (40)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-10 that precede Doha no. 210.

²The story of Ahilya's liberation is narrated in—(a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha 211; (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 57-60.

The story of Ahilya in brief is as follows—

She was the devout and chaste wife of sage Gautam. According to legend, once it so happened that Indra, the lustful king of Gods, fell prey to the beauty of Ahilya, and attempted to outrage her modesty by assuming the form of her husband while the sage had gone out to the river to attend to his daily chores. When the sage returned, Indra tried to escape from the hermitage, but the sage caught him red-handed. So outraged was the sage that he cursed both his chaste wife Ahilya as well as the culprit Indra. He cursed Ahilya that she would become a stone. But when he found out that Indra, the king of Gods, was the real culprit who had deceitfully cheated his wife of her loyalty towards her husband, and that Ahilya was not to be blamed, the sage cursed Indra vehemently. Gautam realised that Indra had been so overcome with a rage of passion that he forgot all senses of ethics, propriety and probity and had assumed the form of the sage to cheat Ahilya. So the sage had then blessed her that when Lord Vishnu incarnated on the earth as Sri Ram, he would visit her place and would touch her with the holy dust of his feet, at which she will be absolved of her sins and her curse, and will resume her original form and come back to heaven. The sage promised her that after her penances and repentance, when she will be purified by Sri Ram's holy feet, he will accept her back as his wife.

Meanwhile, the sage vehemently cursed Indra that his body would be full of holes representing eyes, as he was so lascivious and promiscuous that he could see nothing but a woman's vagina, a virtual 'hole' in the body, with his lustful eyes, which were also equal to a 'hole'. So, let him see whatever he wishes with his whole body, and let the world know about his deformed mentality when it watches him with thousands of holes on his body. As a result, Indra's body became ugly by being perforated with thousands of tiny holes resembling the scars of Chicken Pocks.]

लै गयउ रामहि गाधि सुवन बिलोकि पुर हरषे हिउँ ।
सुनि राउ आगे लेन आयउ सचिव गुर भूसुर लिउँ ।।
नृप गहे पाय असीस पाई मान आदर अति किउँ ।

अवलोकि रामहि अनुभवत मनु ब्रह्मसुख सौगुन किएँ ।।5।।

chanda:

lai gaya'u rāmahī gādhi suvana bilōki pura haraṣē hi'ēm̃.
 suni rā'u āgē lēna āya'u saciva gura bhūsura li'ēm̃.
 nr̥pa gahē pāya asisa pā'ī māna ādara ati ki'ēm̃.
 avalōki rāmahī anubhavata manu brahmasukha sauguna ki'ēm̃. 5.

Chanda 5. The son of sage Gaadhi (i.e. sage Vishwamitra) took Sri Ram to the city (of Janakpur). They felt extremely delighted in their hearts on seeing the city¹.

Hearing of their arrival, the king (Janak) came forward to meet and welcome them. He was accompanied by his ministers, Guru and Brahmins (i.e. elders of the royal court). The king knelt down to clasp the sage's feet (in reverence), and was blessed by him in return. Then he showed great respect and honour to the sage and formally invited him to the city to attend the ceremony².

He (the king) felt a hundred times more happy and contented than the joys of attainment of Brahm (supreme reality) at the sight of Sri Ram³. (Chanda 5)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 212—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 214.

²Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 214—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 215; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 217. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 61; verse 69, stanza no. 1.

³Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 215—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 217. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 64-65; verse no. 69, stanza no. 3.]

देखि मनोहर मूरति मन अनुरागेउ ।
 बँधेउ सनेह बिदेह बिराग बिरागेउ ।।41।।
 प्रमुदित हृदयँ सराहत भल भवसागर ।
 जहँ उपजहिँ अस मानिक बिधि बड़ नागर ।।42।।

dēkhi manōhara mūrati mana anurāgē'u.
 bam̃dhē'u sanēha bidēha birāga birāgē'u. 41.
 pramudita hr̥dayam̃ sarāhata bhala bhavasāgara.
 jaham̃ upajahim̃ asa mānika bidhi baṛa nāgara. 42.

41-42. At the sight of that enchanting and captivating image (of Sri Ram), love and affection sprouted in the heart of the king. He got tied with the Lord by the thread of love and affection, and all his so-called dispassion, detachment and renunciation which made him famous by the name of Videh (literally, one who is detached from his body), vanished¹. (41)

He praised this gross world (inspite of him being enlightened enough to know that it is illusionary and entrapping for the soul of the creature, and not something one would like to choose if given a choice). He was so excited and exhilarated in his heart that he exclaimed—'Ironically, this Bhavsagar (i.e. mundane, deluding, artificial world that is

compared to a fathomless vast ocean which is said to trap the soul in an endless cycle of birth and death, as well as the one that keep the creature eternally tormented by the pulls and tugs of its illusive material charms) appears at last to be so pleasant and good because it is here that such excellent gems (here represented by Lord Ram and Laxman) are produced. Really, the creator Brahma is very clever indeed².' (42)

[Note—¹Janak was an enlightened king, and was renowned for his indepth knowledge of the eclectic spiritual philosophy of the scriptures. As a result of this spiritual knowledge he was deemed to be detached from and unmoved by all sorts of visual attractions of the physical world, including being bewitched by the physical charm of any person. But when he saw Lord Ram he all but forgot about his principles of remaining detached and indifferent to all attractions that have their genesis in one being able to get distracted by the physical charms of the world that one perceives with the help of the organ of sight, i.e. the eye. The sight of Lord Ram caught his imagination though he was supposed to be neutral to what the eyes see in this world. This incident of Janak losing his detached composure and indifference to what is pleasant to behold and what is not is cited by Tulsidas to emphasise the magnitude of Lord Ram's charm and magnificence. If the Lord's physical presence and the beauty of his countenance could sway the completely neutral mind and heart of king Janak who was singularly famous for this great spiritual virtue of being unmoved by and unconcerned with anything physical, then it is easy to imagine what effect the Lord's sight would be on ordinary mortals of the world. This is a sort of a prelude of what is to follow. When Lord Ram and Laxman went on a sight-seeing round of the city of Janakpur, the whole city was stunned by the most bewitchingly beautiful sight of the two brothers as they meandered their way through the city's lanes, streets and avenues.

²King Janak refers to the beauty and charm of Sri Ram and Laxman when he refers to the excellent gems. This shows that he has all but forgotten that he is considered a renunciate king amongst all the worldly kings.

The physical visible gross world is called Bhavsagar as it is like a vast, fathomless ocean which is most difficult to cross. No wise and enlightened man would like to come here if he gets the fortunate chance to get away from its horrifying experiences. But the same detestable world has one big benefit—it is here that the Lord appears in his visible form that one can see and cherish. The cosmic form of the Supreme Being is invisible and indiscernible, but it is only in this physical gross world that the Lord has revealed himself in a physical form on the prayers of his devotees to perform divine acts and deeds that the rest of the world sings and derives immense pleasure and happiness from. It is in this gross physical world that one can see the otherwise unseen form of the Lord God, he can hear the Lord speak and spoken about, he can physically worship the Lord and make offerings to him, he can live with the Lord and play with the Lord—just like the people who had done at the time Lord Vishnu revealed himself as Ram on this earth.

Therefore, inspite of all its drawbacks and shortcomings, despite of it being the cause of all spiritual hurdles for the creature, there is one great virtue with this world—it is here that the Lord manifests himself to live amongst us mortals like one of us, though of course it is another matter that we do not recognize him in our midst. Only a few wise, enlightened and realised souls who have managed to open their inner subtle eyes of insight and wisdom are able to see and recognize the Lord in their midst just like the case of an expert jeweler being able to see the priceless gem concealed in the stone lying unnoticed on the ground, and picking it up, while the rest of the world just walks past it. This is why the wise king Janak praises this world inspite of calling it a 'Bhavsagar' to indicate that he is fully aware that the world he praises is a trap for the soul.]

पुन्य पयोधि मातु पितु ए सिसु सुरतरु ।
 रूप सुधा सुख देत नयन अमरनि बरु ।।43 ।।
 केहि सुकृती के कुँअर कहिय मुनिनायक ।
 गौर स्याम छबि धाम धरें धनु सायक ।।44 ।।

pun'ya payōdhi mātu pitu ē sisu surataru.
 rūpa sudhā sukha dēta nayana amarani baru. 43.
 kēhi sukr̥tī kē kumāra kahiya munināyaka.
 gaura syāma chabi dhāma dharēm dhanu sāyaka. 44.

43-44. [Here, Janak praised the lucky parents of Lord Ram and Laxman.]

Their parents are like an ocean of good and noble deeds as well as auspiciousness. [In other words, their parents must have done a lot of virtuous deeds and auspicious things that they were blessed with such wonderful sons.]

Their (parent's) eyes represent the Gods who were feeling contented by the beautiful and enchanting sight of the Kalpa Tree represented by these children. [The 'Kalpa Tree' is the all wish-fulfilling tree of the Gods. It gives whatever the Gods desire. The desire of the 'eye' is to see things that are nice and pleasant, things that give peace and happiness to the mind and the heart. The sight of Ram and Laxman gives the same happiness and peace to their parents, fulfilling all their desires as parents, just like the Kalpa Tree gives happiness, peace and contentedness to the Gods.] (43)

Oh the chief amongst the sages (i.e. Vishwamitra)! Please tell me whose sons are these two beautiful children, the one with a fair complexion and the one with a dark complexion, who hold a bow and arrow in their hands?¹ (44)

[Note—¹Refer: (a) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 215; Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 217. (b) Geetawali, Baal Kand—verse nos. 64-65; verse no. 69, stanza no. 3.]

बिषय बिमुख मन मोर सेइ परमारथ ।
 इन्हहिं देखि भयो मगन जानि बडु स्वारथ ।।45 ।।
 कहेउ सप्रेम पुलकि मुनि सुनि महिपालक ।
 ए परमारथ रूप ब्रह्ममय बालक ।।46 ।।

biṣaya bimukha mana mōra sē'i paramāratha.
 inhahiṁ dēkhi bhayō magana jāni baṛa svāratha. 45.
 kahē'u saprēma pulaki muni suni mahipālaka.
 ē paramāratha rūpa brahmamaya bālaka. 46.

45-46. Regular contemplation on the pure self as well as on the supreme reality and the absolute truth of creation has made my mind and heart turn away from the materialistic world of sensual pleasures and objects. Instead of the world, I prefer to think and dwell constantly on spiritual matters and the soul. But when I observe the two brothers (Ram and Laxman), my mind and heart become enthralled and captivated by them, thinking that it is in their best interest. [That is, when I see Ram and Laxman I feel that my sight has been fully rewarded, and all my spiritual efforts till now have borne fruit.] (45)

[Seeing this ecstatic mental condition of Janak—] The sage (Vishwamitra) became thrilled and said most affectionately—‘Oh the Lord of the earth (because Janak was a king)! These children are an image of Brahm, the Supreme Being. [And this is why you are so enamoured of them. There is no wonder in your getting so enthralled at their sight because they are not ordinary princes but images of the Lord. Since you always think and contemplate of Brahm, and Brahm is standing right in your front in the form of Ram, I am not at all surprised at your ecstatic condition. It is expected and natural.]¹ (46)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 216, the same idea is expressed, but while in our present text above it is the sage who discloses this fact, in Ram Charit Manas it is Janak who wonders if Ram is indeed Brahm because otherwise it is impossible that his mind and heart would have got so enamoured of Ram him if he had been only an ordinary prince.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 61, stanza no. 4, and the whole of verse no. 65.]

पूषन बंस बिभूषन दसरथ नंदन।
 नाम राम अरु लखन सुरारि निकंदन।।47।।
 रूप सील बय बंस राम परिपूरन।
 समुझि कठिन पन आपन लाग बिसूरन।।48।।

pūṣana bansa bibhūṣana dasaratha nandana.
 nāma rāma aru lakhana surāri nikandana. 47.
 rūpa sīla baya bansa rāma paripūrana.
 samujhi kaṭhina pana āpana lāga bisūrana. 48.

47-48. [Sage Vishwamitra introduced Lord Ram and Laxman to Janak as follows—]

They are the jewels of the sun-race (the solar dynasty that descended from the Sun God), and are the sons of king Dasrath (of Ayodhya). Their names are Ram and Laxman respectively, and they are the destroyers of demons.¹ (47)

Sri Ram is wholesome in respect of beauty, noble characters, fine virtues, noble pedigree and proper age (i.e. he is in his teens and has attained a marrigable age). [In other words, the sage indirectly recommended to Janak to consider Ram as a suitable candidate for becoming a groom for his daughter Sita for whom he has organized the bow ceremony. The wise sage chose the correct moment to advocate Ram’s case as a suitable groom for Janak’s daughter because the king has just now shown keen interest in the two princes, Ram and Laxman, and the sage thought that a word of recommendation on his part may help Janak make up his mind in favour of Ram.]’

The king heard all this (i.e. the subtle hint that the sage was giving to him about Ram being an eligible bachelor and a suitable candidate to be selected as the groom), but remembering his stern vows (that Sita would be married only to someone who lifts and strings the sturdy bow of Lord Shiva, and that he cannot unilaterally decide to select Ram as the groom for his daughter at this late hour when countless other princes have already arrived, and with the ceremony scheduled for the next day in full public view it is unthinkable at this late stage to rescind on his vows) the king became very pensive, gloomy and depressed. [This was because though Janak personally favoured and liked to see Ram as the groom for his daughter Sita, the things were in such a fix that he cannot

do so. Janak was mentally regretting his own decision to hold the bow ceremony, and his mind churned rapidly to find some way out so that he could wriggle out of his dilemma, save his face and reputation, and somehow be able to marry Sita with Ram. But it appeared to be an impossible task. See Chanda no. 6 below.] (48)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 216 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 66-68, and especially stanza no. 2 of verse no. 69.]

लागे बिसूरन समुझि पन मन बहुरि धीरज आनि कै ।
 लै चले देखावन रंगभूमि अनेक बिधि सनमानि कै ॥
 कौसिक सराही रुचिर रचना जनक सुनि हरषित भए ।
 तब राम लखन समेत मुनि कहँ सुभग सिंहासन दए ॥ 6 ॥

chanda:

lāgē bisūrana samujhi pana mana bahuri dhīraja āni kai.
 lai calē dēkhāvana raṅgabhūmi anēka bidhi sanamāni kai.
 kausika sarāhī rucira racanā janaka suni haraṣita bha'ē.
 taba rāma lakhana samēta muni kaham' subhaga sinhāsana da'ē. 6.

Chanda 6. He (Janak) became deeply pensive when he remembered his vows (that Sita would be married only to that person who strings Lord Shiva's bow). Gradually he overcame his depressive thoughts and regained his composure, patiently expressing a lot of respect and giving due honour to them (Ram and Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra). Then he took them along to show them around the arena where the challenging ceremony of the bow was to be held.

Kaushik (Vishwamitra) lauded the grandeur and magnificence of the venue, hearing which the king felt very delighted. Then he gave the sage a magnificent throne to sit upon, along with Sri Ram and Laxman. (Chanda no. 6)

[Note—By reading this Chanda it appears that after welcoming sage Vishwamitra and meeting Ram and Laxman, king Janak escorted them directly to the venue of the bow ceremony, took them around so they could see it, and then seated them at some place that was earmarked for special guests of honour.

But a different version is narrated in the Ram Charit Manas as well as Geetawali. There it is mentioned that after their meeting the king went home to his palace, and sage Vishwamitra, Ram and Laxman to the place designated for their stay by the king. It was on the morning of the next day that the sage and the two brothers were formally invited by messengers of Janak to come to the venue of the bow ceremony. When the three reached there, Janak gave them a high seat of honour to sit upon.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 239—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 240 where it is narrated how messengers were sent by the king to bring the sage along with the two brothers to the venue of the bow ceremony; and Doha no. 244 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that narrate how the king escorted them around the venue and then gave them a high throne to sit upon.

Earlier, in Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 217 it said that after meeting the sage and the two brothers, the king went to his palace.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 69, stanza no. 1 that says that the king went to his palace after meeting them; and verse no. 68, stanza no. 6 that says that they went to the venue of the bow ceremony the next morning at the invitation of king Janak.]

Sri Ram in the arena of the bow-lifting ceremony

राजत राज समाज जुगल रघुकुल मनि ।
मनहुँ सरद बिधु उभय नखत धरनी धर ।।49।।
काकपच्छ सिर सुभग सरोरुह लोचन ।
गौर स्याम सत कोटि काम मद मोचन ।।50।।

rājata rāja samāja jugala raghukula mani.
manahum̐ sarada bidhu ubhaya nakhata dharanī dhara. 49.
kākapaccha sira subhaga sarōruha lōcana.
gaura syāma sata kōṭi kāma mada mōcana. 50.

49-50. Those two jewels of the Raghu's clan (a reference to Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) looked so glorious and magnificent in that assembly of kings as if two moons of a winter's night are present simultaneously amidst the countless stars represented by the huge throng of kings. (49)

The two brothers present a wonderful and most enchanting sight to behold with beautiful curled hairs on their heads, beautiful eyes which are like the lotus flower*, and handsome bodies, which are of a dark and fair complexion respectively, are so bewitchingly attractive that they trounce the pride and vanity of millions of Kamdeocupid. (50)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 241—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 in a general way.

Specifically, refer: Doha no. 242; Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 243.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 73-79.

*It is to be noted here that in Indian scriptures, the eyes and the feet of Lord Ram are invariably compared to the 'lotus flower'. What is the significance of this comparison? Well, for one, it is to indicate that they are beautiful like the lotus flower, but there is a deeper meaning to it. The lotus flower grows in a pond whose water may be dirty and polluted but still none of the filth is said to stick to the petals of the lotus which manages to retain its purity and cleanliness in spite of the surrounding filth. The dirty water of the pond does not stick to the petals of the lotus. Likewise, when the immaculate and completely pure and divine Supreme Being takes the form of Lord Ram who appears to be a human being, the latter form of the Lord retains all the purity and holiness that the Lord's cosmic form has. The physical gross form of the Lord is not tainted by any of the corruptions, evil characters and shortcomings that are a natural part of the gross world.

In other words, though Lord Ram lives in this gross world full of shortcomings and behaves in an ordinary fashion as if he were an ordinary man, though he walks on this earth on which evil and sinful other creatures walk, the Lord is not at all affected by anything gross and tainted; the Lord maintains his holiness, divinity and purity. Similarly, though the Lord sees so many sights of the material world, though he sees the gross world of material sense objects, he is not concerned with any of them, maintaining his complete aloofness and detachment from all temptations and allurements that an ordinary creature is attracted to by the virtue of his seeing them with his eyes. While an ordinary creature sees this artificial world which is so magnificent

and life-like inspite of it being an illusion created by the conditioned mind that he takes it to be real and granted, arguing that if he can personally see it and witness it then it must be the truth, Lord Ram knows that it is an illusion. The Lord is not misled into believing that the world is true by the sights that he sees around him, but he can see behind this external misleading façade to understand the truth and reality. It means also that while it is easy to deceive the world by pretensions and creating external visuals of charm, it is impossible to cheat the Lord because he can see the truth and know the reality of any given situation.

Metaphysically this translates into being self-realised, wise and enlightened. The fact that the Lord's heart and mind are not affected or tainted in the least by the countless sins and evils that pervade this gross world inspite of his walking on it and seeing every sight in it is metaphorically depicted by comparing the Lord's feet and eyes with the Lotus flower.

Good virtues are always deemed 'beautiful', and bad ones are 'ugly'. This is the reason why "Lord Ram's lotus-like eyes are beautiful".

Similarly, inspite of walking on earth that is gross and unclean, inspite of living in the midst of gross material sense objects in this world, the Lord remains eternally detached from them. The Lord never uses his legs to go in that direction that is against the laws of Dharma, i.e. the laws as laid down by the scriptures. On the contrary, the Lord always treads the path of Dharma; he always goes in the direction that is righteous and noble; he always walks on the path that is righteous and noble. That is why his feet are compared to the "Lotus flower" which is always clean inspite of living in the dirty water of a pond.]

तिलकु ललित सर भ्रुकुटी काम कमानै ।
 श्रवन बिभूषन रुचिर देखि मन मानै ॥51॥
 नासा चिबुक कपोल अधर रद सुंदर ।
 बदन सरद बिधु निंदक सहज मनोहर ॥52॥

tilaku lalita sara bhrukuṭī kāma kamānai.
 śravana bibhūṣana rucira dēkhi mana mānai. 51.
 nāsā cibuka kapōla adhara rada sundara.
 badana sarada bidhu nindaka sahaja manōhara. 52.

51-52. The Tilak mark (which is a religious symbol marked on the forehead with a paste of sandalwood and saffron mixed with water) appears to be like an arrow mounted on the bow of Kamdeo-cupid which is represented by their (Ram and Laxman's) curved eyebrows. The mind and heart becomes delighted at the sight of the ornaments worn by them in their ears (the ear-rings). (51)

Their nose, chin, cheeks, lips and teeth are very beautiful to behold, while their faces—which put to shame the beauty of the full Moon of a winter night—are so enchanting that they virtually hold the beholder's mind and heart captive and enthralled by their inherent charm. (52)

[Note—These verses describe the beautiful imagery of Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman. Refer also to verse nos. 53-54 below.

The curved eyebrows are compared to the bow of Kamdeo who is the patron God of beauty, the Tilak Mark on the forehead is compared to the arrow because it is placed vertically just above the middle of the eyebrows like a mounted arrow on an actual bow.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 243—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 244; (ii) Doha no. 219 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 3-8.

Refer also to: Geetawali—(i) Baal Kand, verse nos. 62; verse no. 63, stanza nos. 1-3; verse no. 73, stanza nos. 2-5; (ii) Uttar Kand, verse no. 10, stanza no. 4; verse no. 12, stanza no. 2.]

उर बिसाल बृष कंध सुभग भुज अतिबल ।
पीत बसन उपबीत कंठ मुकुता फल ।।53 ।।
कटि निषंग कर कमलन्हि धरें धनु-सायक ।
सकल अंग मन मोहन जोहन लायक ।।54 ।।

ura bisāla br̥ṣa kandha subhaga bhuja atibala.
pīta basana upabīta kaṇṭha mukutā phala. 53.
kaṭi niṣaṅga kara kamalanhi dharēṁ dhanu-sāyaka.
sakala aṅga mana mōhana jōhana lāyaka. 54.

53-54. They have a broad chest. Their shoulders are as magnificent and majestic as those of a bull, while their arms are very strong and sturdy. They wear Pitambars (yellow, seamless, silk, body wrapping cloth) and the sacred thread, while a necklace of pearls adorn their necks. (53)

They have a quiver tied to their waists, and hold a bow and arrow in their hands. In this manner, all their body parts are enchanting for the mind and heart, and are worth beholding. (54)

[Note—Refer note of verse nos. 51-52 above.

Lord Ram looked exceptionally handsome and charming. He had a well chiseled body with sharp attractive features. Anyone who saw him was simply swept off his or her feet by the mere beauty of the sight.]

राम-लखन-छबि देखि मगन भए पुरजन ।
उर आनंद जल लोचन प्रेम पुलक तन ।।55 ।।
नारि परस्पर कहहिं देखि दोउ भाइन्ह ।
लहेउ जनम फल आजु जनमि जग आइन्ह ।।56 ।।

rāma-lakhana-chabi dēkhi magana bha'ē purajana.
ura ānanda jala lōcana prēma pulaka tana. 55.
nāri paraspara kahahir̥m dēkhi dō'u bhā'inha.
lahē'u janama phala āju janami jaga ā'inha. 56.

55-56. Watching the majestic beauty of Sri Ram and Laxman, the citizens of the city (of Janakpur) became exhilarated. Their hearts were delighted, their eyes were filled with tears (of joy), and their bodies were thrilled with affection for the Lord. (55)

Looking at the two brothers, the womenfolk of the city consider themselves most fortunate. They tell each other enthusiastically—‘We have received the reward of taking birth in this world.’¹(56)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223.

Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 73-79.]

जग जनमि लोयन लाहु पाए सकल सिवहि मनावहीं ।
 बरु मिलौ सीतहि सौँवरो हम हरषि मंगल गावहीं ।।
 एक कहहिं कुँवरु किसोर कुलिस कठोर सिव धनु है महा ।
 किमि लेहिं बाल मराल मंदर नृपहि अस काहुँ न कहा ।। 7 ।।

jaga janami lōyana lāhu pā'ē sakala sivahi manāvahīṁ.
 baru milau sītahi sām̐varō hama haraṣi maṅgala gāvahīṁ.
 ēka kahahīṁ kum̐varu kisōra kulisa kaṭhōra siva dhanu hai mahā.
 kimi lēhīṁ bāla marāla mandara nr̥pahi asa kāhum̐ na kahā. 7.

Chanda 7. [The mesmerised womenfolk of Janakpur thank their good luck that they are able to have a chance to watch Lord Ram and Laxman at so close a range and to their heart's content.]

‘After having taken birth in this world and being able to see it with our eyes for so long, it is for the first time now that we feel that our eyes have been fully rewarded for their ability to see. [In other words, we profusely thank our eyes that have enabled us to see the magnificent sight of the Lord in our midst. Otherwise, how could we see him? Now we also understand why our good luck had provided us with eyes that could see instead of eyes that would be blind. It is because of these eyes that we have been able to see this bewitching sight of the two brothers, Ram and Laxman. Now we realise that of all the sights that we have been seeing all along in our lives till now and believing them to be beautiful, none can ever hope to bear any resemblance to or be fit to be compared with the beauty and charm of this magnificent image of Lord Ram and his brother Laxman that stands right before our eyes today. Therefore, we consider ourselves exceedingly lucky and exceptionally privileged to have eyes that could see, that have made it possible for us to see the Lord, for otherwise we would have missed this golden chance of a lifetime.]’

All of them earnestly pray to Lord Shiva and invoke his blessings with the hope that Sita would get the dark-complexioned prince (i.e. Lord Ram) as her groom, and consequentially they would all can get an opportunity to sing songs of felicitations and joy that would mark such an auspicious occasion.

Some among the womenfolk wonder—‘The prince is still very young while Shiva’s bow is hard as the Vajra (Indra’s weapon, considered the hardest object in this creation). Say, why has no one dared and gathered courage to tell (advise or warn) Janak to consider how it was ever possible for the young ones of a Swan to be able to lift a huge mountain?’

[Here, Lord Ram is compared to a young Swan, and the bow to a heavy mountain. The womenfolk of Janakpur wonder how Ram would lift this heavy bow to qualify to marry Sita. They wonder why Janak is not marrying Sita to Ram directly, but insisting that she would be married to any person who lifts the heavy bow of Lord Shiva. Now that Lord Shiva has been invoked and requested by them that Ram be made the groom of Sita, it is certain to happen. But this would entail Ram lifting the heavy bow, something that seems difficult if not outright impossible. Can’t someone tell Janak not to force Ram to lift the bow as a precondition of marrying Sita? How can this young and delicate prince

lift an old and heavy bow which is like a young swan being tasked to lift a huge mountain?]) (7)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) from Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249. The only difference is that here the citizens pray to the creator Brahma; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255; (iii) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257 where Sita's mother expresses the same view as other womenfolk; and (iv) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Doha no. 258 where Sita is exceedingly worried and says almost the same thing as the other womenfolk.

Refer also to: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 80-83.]

भे निरास सब भूप बिलोकत रामहि ।
पन परिहरि सिय देब जनक बरु स्यामहि ।।57।।
कहहिं एक भलि बात ब्याहु भल होइहि ।
बर दुलहिनि लागि जनक अपनपन खोइहि ।।58।।

bhē nirāsa saba bhūpa bilōkata rāmaḥi.
pana parihari siya dēba janaka baru syāmahi. 57.
kahahim̐ ēka bhali bāta byāhu bhala hō'ihī.
bara dulahini lagi janaka apanapana khō'ihī. 58.

57-58. Looking at Sri Ram, all the assembled kings (who had gathered at the venue of the bow ceremony to try their luck by lifting the bow) lost all hopes of ever marrying Sita, and they speculated that now Janak would certainly marry Sita to the dark-complexioned groom by abandoning his stubbornness and revoking his declared vow (that only the person who lifts and strings the bow would be betrothed to Sita). (57)

Some of them assert that it is a good thing for it will be a grand marriage if Janak indeed sets aside his stern vows for the sake of the happiness of the groom and the bride (because it would be a perfect match). (58).

[Note—It is to be noted that the kings have already decided that Sri Ram is the groom by using the word 'Bar', meaning a groom, for him, and the word 'Dulhini' for Sita in the 2nd line of verse 58.

We must remember that the author is Tulsidas, and for him Lord Ram was indeed the eternal groom for Sita because Lord Ram was an incarnation of Lord Vishnu and Sita of goddess Laxmi who was the eternal consort of the Lord. It is absolutely unthinkable to imagine anyone else to be a groom for Sita.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza no. 7; verse no. 90, stanza no. 1.

Refer also to verse no. 59-60 below.]

सुचि सुजान नृप कहहिं हमहि अस सूझई ।
तेज प्रताप रूप जहँ तहँ बल बूझई ।।59।।
चितइ न सकहु राम तन गाल बजावहु ।
बिधि बस बलउ लजान सुमति न लजावहु ।।60।।

suci sujāna nr̥pa kahahim̐ hamahi asa sūjha'ī.
 tēja pratāpa rūpa jaham̐ taham̐ bala būjha'ī. 59.
 cita'ī na sakahu rāma tana gāla bajāvahu.
 bidhi basa bala'u lajāna sumati na lajāvahu. 60.

59-60. Those kings who were wise, practical, and dispassionate in their hearts, said, 'It appears to us that wherever there is glory, majesty, fame and beauty, the virtues of strength and valour are also present there.

[In the assembly of invited kings there were some who realised that Sita was too young for them, and Ram was a perfect match for her. So when they saw that other kings were getting restless and eager to grab the first chance to break the bow in order to marry Sita, these wise kings admonished and rebuked them. They remarked that the person, who is so charming and majestic to look at, a reference to Lord Ram, is also strong enough to lift the bow. They implied that none of the kings had the charm and majesty that Lord Ram had, and they aren't strong enough to lift Lord Shiva's bow. Therefore, why don't they sit down quietly instead of shuffling excitedly on their seats; why don't they come to their senses and avoid proving themselves impotent and lesser in strength by not attempting to lift the bow and making their incompetence and irrelevance evident?] (59)

Look, you cannot lift your eyes even as much as to glimpse directly at Sri Ram¹ (because you feel shy and ashamed at yourself when you compare your own lack of strength, majesty, glamour and charm with that of Lord Ram, because you have developed an inferiority complex in the face of the glamour and majesty that Ram possesses, and because you have realised that none of you have the stature behooving of a groom suitable for Sita as much as that of Ram).

Then say, why do you unnecessarily boast²? It is due to destiny that your strength and valour has already been put to shame (refer verse no. 11). Now then, why do you put your wisdom and intellect also to shame and dishonour (by not being wise and intelligent enough to realise your limitations and ground realities, and boasting that you will break the bow and marry Sita when you know that you do not have the wherewithal to do so, and when you know that a suitable candidate in the form of Lord Ram has come, who is certain to find favour with Sita, her father and the rest of the people of Janakpur)?' (60).

[Note—See note of verse nos. 57-58.

¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 91, stanza no. 3 which says that the failed kings sat with bowed head in shame.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267. When the kings had failed to lift the bow and Lord Ram had successfully not only lifted it but also broke it into two halves as he bent the bow to string it, the frustrated kings smoked a conspiracy, and they stood up in revolt. They created a rucous and were itching for a fight, challenging that no one can marry the young girl as long as they are alive—a clear hint that a fierce battle was in the offing. It was then that some of the wise kings who had earlier advised them to refrain from attempting to lift the bow intervened and sternly rebuked them.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 95.]

अवसि राम के उठत सरासन टूटिहि ।
 गवनहिं रामसमाज नाक अस फूटिहि ॥61॥
 कस न पिअहु भरि लोचन रूप सुधा रसु ।
 करहु कृतारथ जन्म होहु कत नर पसु ॥62॥

avasi rāma kē uṭhata sarāsana ṭūṭihi.
 gavanahim rāmasamāja nāka asa phūṭihi. 61.
 kasa na pi'ahu bhari lōcana rūpa sudhā rasu.
 karahu kṛtāratha janma hōhu kata nara pasu. 62.

61-62. [Tulsidas says that—] It is absolutely certain that when Lord Ram gets up, the bow shall be broken, while the rest of the assembled kings and their retinue will have to go back home empty-handed, burdened by shame and ignominy, just like one has to leave a place when his nose is broken (and starts bleeding—a figure of speech implying shame, humiliation and dishonour)¹. (61)

[So, the good kings reproached the greedy kings by saying—] ‘Why don’t you fellows drink the nectar-like beauty (of Sri Ram) to your heart’s content? Make yourself feel contented and privileged by doing so² (because when it is certain that you fellows won’t marry Sita, then why not use this opportunity to enjoy the wonderful spectacle of Lord Ram breaking the bow and marrying Sita, as this chance will not come to you again in life; why do you wish to fritter it away out of your haughtiness and vanity?). Why do you want to become beastly and mean, and behave like an animal in the guise of a man?

[That is, why don’t you enjoy the wonderful sight of Lord Ram looking so majestic and grand in the middle of the assembly? Have you ever seen such a lovely prince in your life? In his comparison all of you look like ugly animals. Your behaviour is also like a stupid and lustful animal that has no sense of propriety and wisdom because all of you yearn to marry Sita who is much younger in age than any of you, and none of you is a suitable match for her by any yardstick. Can’t you see the dilemma that Janak is in—put yourselves in his place and think what you would do. When Ram is present as a candidate, say which father would not like to marry his beloved daughter to him as compared to you all, none of whom is even like a dark shadow of this glorious prince. When it is dead certain that Sita will be married to Ram, what sense is there in inviting humiliation and shame by attempting to lift the bow, especially when it is Lord Shiva’s bow and the latter has already been invoked by the citizens as well as Sita to make things happen in a way that the bow breaks automatically at the hands of Ram, implying that it would not move a fraction no matter how hard you all try.

In this scenario, what sense is there in boasting that you have great strength? Why don’t you fill your hearts and eyes with the pleasant sight of Lord Ram who is like a lotus amongst other flowers in this pond representing the venue of the bow ceremony?] (62)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 245 along with preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-4; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 246; (c) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 251; (d) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 257.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 70, stanza no. 9; (b) verse no. 79, stanza nos. 2-3; (c) verse no. 80; (d) verse no. 82, stanza no. 1; (e) verse no. 85, stanza no. 1; and (f) verse no. 89, stanza nos. 4-6.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 266—to along with preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-4.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza nos. 8-9; verse no. Refer also to Chanda no. 8 below.]

दुहु दिसि राजकुमार बिराजत मुनिबर।
नील पीत पाथोज बीच जनु दिनकर॥63॥
काकपच्छ रिषि परसत पानि सरोजनि।
लाल कमल जनु लालत बाल मनोजनि॥64॥

duhu disi rājakumāra birājata munibara.
nīla pīta pāthōja bīca janu dinakara. 63.
kākapaccha riṣi parasata pāni sarōjani.
lāla kamala janu lālata bāla manōjani. 64.

63-64. The two princes (Ram and Laxman) look magnificent on either side of the sage (Vishwamitra), and this view reminds one of the wonderful and enchanting sight of the sun when it is viewed at an angle in such a way that it has a blue-tinged and a yellow-tinged lotus flower on either side of it.

[In this imagery, Lord Ram is compared to the blue lotus because he has a dark complexion, Laxman to a yellow lotus as he has a fair complexion, and sage Vishwamitra to the sun as he is radiant with divine energy that he has accumulated by doing severe Tapa, effusing out of him.] (63)

The sage affectionately moves his hands on the curled lock of hairs dangling on the side of the ears of the two princes. This view is like the dark-red petals of a lotus flower caressing two young sons of Kamdeo-cupid.

[In this imagery, Lord Ram and Laxman are like the two most handsome sons of Kamdeo, the patron God of beauty, and the sage's hands are compared to the petals of the red lotus. The young ones of Kamdeo who are sitting near the lotus flower are being tenderly caressed by the petals as they sway in the soft wind.] (64).

[Note—Verse no. 63 refers to the sight of the rising sun that looks beautiful when it is viewed with a blue and a yellow tinged lotus flower held on either side of the line of vision. Verse no. 64 is another example of metaphor which Tulsidas has profusely made use of in his compositions. The red lotus is compared to sage Vishwamitra's hands, and the two infants of Kamdeo-cupid are likened to the faces of Sri Ram and Laxman. Kamdeo-cupid is considered the most attractive entity in the whole of creation.]

मनसिज मनोहर मधुर मूरति कस न सादर जोवहू।
बिनु काज राज समाज महुँ तजि लाज आपु बिगोवहू॥
सिष देइ भूपति साधु भूप अनूप छबि देखन लगे।
रघुबंस कैरव चंद चितइ चकोर जिमि लोचन लगे॥8॥

chanda:

manasija manōhara madhura mūrati kasa na sādara jōvahū.
binu kāja rāja samāja mahamū taji lāja āpu bigōvahū.
siṣa dē'i bhūpati sādhu bhūpa anūpa chabi dēkhana lagē.
raghubansa kairava canda cita'i cakōra jimi lōcana lagē. 8.

Chanda 8. [This Chanda continues with what has been said in verse no. 61-62 above.]

‘Oh, why don’t you respectfully and intently look at the sweet and enchanting image (of Lord Ram) that has the ability to captivate and enthrall even the heart of Kamdeo-cupid? All of you unnecessarily put yourselves to shame in the assembly of kings without any rhyme or reason.’¹

Having given this advice to the other kings, the saintly kings began to cheerfully look at the beautiful image (of Sri Ram and Laxman). They stared at the lotus-like face of the Moon of the Raghu’s clan (i.e. the beautiful face of Lord Ram) just like the bird Chakor looks at the full moon without blinking².

[‘Chakor’ is the Indian red-legged partridge. This bird is famed because it stares unblinkingly at the full moon as it is very much enchanted by the beauty of the full moon’s disc. The bird is cited when a poet wishes to draw a parallel with someone exceedingly enamoured of and in love with another person so much so that he stares at his beloved’s face unblinkingly, totally oblivious of his surroundings and circumstances.

In this stanza, Lord Ram and Laxman’s faces are like the full moon, and the saintly kings are like the numerous Chakor birds that fix their gazes on this moon. Lord Ram was born in the dynasty of great kings started by an ancient king by the name of Raghu who ruled from Ayodhya.] (Chanda no. 8)

[Note—¹Refer: Note of verse nos. 61-62 above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 246.]

पुर नर नारि निहारहिं रघुकुल दीपहि ।
दोषु नेहबस देहिं बिदेह महीपहि ॥ 65 ॥
एक कहहिं भल भूप देहु जनि दूषन ।
नृप न सोह बिनु बचन नाक बिनु भूषन ॥ 66 ॥

pura nara nāri nihārahiṁ raghukula dīpahi.
dōṣu nēhabasa dēhiṁ bidēha mahīpahi. 65.
ēka kahahiṁ bhala bhūpa dēhu jani dūṣana.
nr̥pa na sōha binu bacana nāka binu bhūṣana. 66.

65-66. The ladies and gentlemen of the city intently, unblinkingly and closely watch Sri Ram who is like a lamp of king Raghu’s clan. [That is, Lord Ram is the brightest son of this dynasty.] The citizens are so overwhelmed and moved with love and affection for the Lord that they put the blame for the dilemma and uncertainties that have been created on king Videh (king Janak)¹.

[What was the uncertainty and dilemma? The king had vowed that anyone who lifts and strings the bow of Lord Shiva would marry Sita. But with Ram present in their

midst, the citizens want him to be chosen as the groom for Sita. This is the dilemma and the quandary—the king will not go back on his vows, and therefore it is uncertain whether their wishes to see Sita married to Ram would be fulfilled.] (65)

Someone says, ‘The king is very good and truthful; don’t blame him. Look, a king who does not steadfastly adheres to his words or vows, and a woman who does not wear the basic ornament of the nose-pin or the nose-ring, do not look good and are not appreciated.’

[When some of the citizens began accusing king Janak of being stubborn in sticking to his vows of tying the marriage of Sita with the bow, and in the process putting her future at an uncertain stake, some wise amongst them defended the king. They said that the king is not at fault. When he had set the condition of the lifting of the formidable bow he was not aware of Lord Ram. And once the condition is set and declared openly, it would be absolutely unrighteous and unpardonable for any noble king to go back on his own words. So, though it is true that in the present instance this stern vow is acting as a spoil-sport, but one must not blame the king for this impasse. In fact, the king himself is in a dilemma; he himself regrets that he made this vow. But now it can’t be helped.]² (66)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 223; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256; and (c) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precedes Doha no. 258.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 78, stanza no. 3; (b) verse no. 82, stanza no. 3; and (c) verse no. 86;

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 76, stanza no. 3; (b) verse no. 80; (c) verse no. 87, stanza nos. 2-4.]

हमरें जान जनेस बहुत भल कीन्हैउ ।
पन मिस लोचन लाहु सबन्हि कहँ दीन्हैउ ।।67 ।।
अस सुकृती नरनाहु जो मन अभिलाषिहि ।
सो पुरइहिं जगदीस परज पन राखिहि ।।68 ।।

hamarēm jāna janēsa bahuta bhala kīnhē'u.
pana misa lōcana lāhu sabanhi kaham' dīnhē'u. 67.
asa sukr̥tī naranāhu jō mana abhilāṣihi.
sō pura'ihim jagadīsa paraja pana rākhihi. 68.

67-68. [The citizens who had praised king Janak, continued—]

‘In our opinion, the king has done a good thing of making the vow because it is due to it that our eyes have been rewarded with the opportunity to have this fruit (or reward in the form of the rare privilege of viewing Lord Ram and Laxman).

[If the king hadn’t organized this ceremony and had married Sita to some prince of his choice, there would not have been an opportunity for sage Vishwamitra to bring Ram and Laxman here, and we all would have missed on this golden chance of our lifetime. So, instead of accusing the king of being stern and tying the future of Sita to the bow we must rather thank him for giving us this chance of viewing Lord Ram at such close quarters.]¹ (67)

All the desires and wishes that such a virtuous, righteous, truthful and noble king makes in his heart are sure to be fulfilled by the Lord God, and the Lord shall uphold his (king's) vows, promises and words by ensuring that the desire of his heart is fulfilled.

[And what is the desire of the king? Well, the king himself is eager to see Ram as the groom. So he must also be praying to Lord Shiva to make things happen in such a way that Ram marries Sita and his vows are also upheld. Had the king known about Ram prior to making his vows, it is sure that he would not have done so and instead invited Ram directly to marry Sita.]² (68)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand—(a) verse no. 76; (b) verse no. 77, stanza no. 3; (c) verse nos. 79—80; and (d) verse no. 81, stanza no. 2.

Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222.

²Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand—verse no. 68, stanza nos. 6, 9; verse nos. 68, 79, 86—88.

In fact, verse no. 79 of Geetawali, Baal Kand expressly says that the citizens of Janakpur thanked Janak that he had arranged for the bow ceremony which led to Lord Ram coming to the city, thereby giving the people a golden opportunity of a lifetime, something they would have missed if this ceremony was not held. So they all thanked the king profusely.

Verse nos. 69-70 that follow below give an answer as to why it was impossible for the king to break his vows now and marry Sita with Ram.]

प्रथम सुनत जो राउ राम गुन—रूपहि ।
बोली ब्याहि सिय देत दोष नहिं भूपहि ।।69 ।।
अब करि पड़ज पंच महुँ जो पन त्यागै ।
बिधि गति जानि न जाइ अजसु जग जागै ।।70 ।।

prathama sunata jō rā'u rāma guna-rūpahi.
bōli byāhi siya dēta dōṣa nahim bhūpahi. 69.
aba kari pa'ija pañca maham' jō pana tyāgai.
bidhi gati jāni na jā'i ajasu jaga jāgai. 70.

69-70. 'If the king had heard about the beauty and virtuous characters of Sri Ram prior to his making the vow, then he would have certainly invited him and would have betrothed Sita to him. No one would have found any fault with the king then. [Refer verse no. 68 above, and verse nos. 73-74 below.] (69)

But now having once made a particular vow and then breaking it in front of the 'Panchas'—literally meaning 'five witnesses' but here implying the whole assembly, the king is bound to invite an extremely bad name and infamy as a king who tells lies, is selfish and unrighteous. This infamy will spread across the world like wild-fire, and it is something most incongruous to even imagine and think of for such a noble king as Janak¹. (70)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 252 in which king Janak has himself explicitly reiterated this point.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 2 in which Sita too fears immense ignominy if her father breaks the vow he has already declared.]

अजहुँ अवसि रघुनंदन चाप चढ़ाउब ।
 ब्याह उछाह सुमंगल त्रिभुवन गाउब ॥71॥
 लागि झरोखन्ह झाँकहिं भूपति भामिनि ।
 कहत बचन रद लसहिं दमक जनु दामिनि ॥72॥

ajahum' avasi raghunandana cāpa caṛhā'uba.
 byāha uchāha sumāṅgala tribhuvana gā'uba. 71.
 lāgi jharōkhanha jhām'kahim' bhūpati bhāmini.
 kahata bacana rada lasahim' damaka janu dāmini. 72.

71-72. 'Indeed, even now it is sure that Raghunandan (Sri Ram) shall lift and string the bow, and the whole of the three worlds shall sing felicitous songs on the occasion of his marriage ceremony (with Sita).' [The phrase 'three world' means the entire world. In classical literature, the world is divided into three segments—viz. the heaven, the earth, and the subterranean world.] (71)

Presently, the royal womenfolk are watching from the palace balconies and windows, and when they talk, their teeth shine and dazzle like electric. (72)

[Note—The assembly has gathered at the venue, and a lot of debate is underway as to who will lift the bow and marry Sita. The royal ladies are enthralled by the beauty of Lord Ram, and they lean out of palace balconies and windows to gaze at the Lord. This scene reminds one of Ram Charit Manas where it is described how the womenfolk of Janakpur had poured out of their homes and peered out of their balconies and windows to look at Lord Ram and Laxman as they wondered in the city of Janakpur on a sight-seeing visit. Refer: Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 220 in particular, and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 220—to Doha no. 223 in general.]

जनु दमक दामिनि रूप रति मद निदरि सुंदरि सोहहीं ।
 मुनि ढिग देखाए सखिन्ह कुँवर बिलोकि छबि मन मोहहीं ॥
 सिय मातु हरषी निरखि सुषमा अति अलौकिक रामकी ।
 हिय कहति कहँ धनु कुँअर कहँ बिपरीत गति बिधि बाम की ॥9॥

janu damaka dāmini rūpa rati mada nidari sundari sōhahīm.
 muni ḍhiga dēkhā'ē sakhinha kum'vara bilōki chabi mana mōhahīm.
 siya mātu haraṣī nirakhi suṣamā ati alaukika rāmakī.
 hiya kahati kaham' dhanu kum'ara kaham' biparīta gati bidhi bāma kī. 9.

Chanda 9. Their (the women companions of the queen-mother) teeth resemble the dazzle of lightening. The beautiful woman are looking adorable, and their charm, beauty and magnificence appears to put to shame the pride and haughtiness of Rati, the consort of Kamdeo, as being the most beautiful lady in existence.

The companions of the queen (the mother of Sita) pointed out to her the two princes who were seated near the sage (Vishwamitra). At this magnificent sight, the queen's heart and mind were enthralled, and she was enamoured by the wonderful view of the two young princes whose sight presented a most bewitching and captivating

image. The mother of Sita (named Sunaina) felt glad and most delighted when she looked at this magnificent view of the Lord's stupendous beauty.

She was on the horns of a formidable dilemma, worried about the fate of her daughter. She thought, 'On the one hand is the old and creaky bow, and on the other hand is this wonderful prince! The ways of the creator are often-times antagonist to the desires of the heart, as they sometimes create a situation where nonsense can't be avoided*.'

[This has reference to the nonsense of tying the fate of Sita with an old decrepit bow when a fully eligible candidate is standing right in front to become her groom. The creator had destined in the fate of Sita that her marriage would be hinged on a bow, but when the creator was writing her destiny he did not realise that things might be different on the ground when the time comes for the actual marriage, and so he did not make provisions for it. Therefore, Ram will have to break the bow if he has to marry Sita, and this bow is rusty, old and stubbornly hard. Say, how ridiculous it is to hinge the life of a girl on such lifeless object as the bow? But what can be done if this is her destiny decided by the thoughtless creator?

All these thoughts were swirling in the mind of Sita's mother as she watched Lord Ram and then looked at the bow lying on the elevated and decorated platform.] (Chanda no. 9)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 256.

Also, to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 81-83.

*Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 in which Sita's mother laments "the ways of the creator are so quirky that one cannot know what will happen now".]

कहि प्रिय बचन सखिन्ह सन रानि बिसूरति ।
कहाँ कठिन सिव धनुष कहाँ मृदु मूरति ॥73॥
जौं बिधि लोचन अतिथि करत नहिं रामहि ।
तौ कोउ नृपहि न देत दोषु परिनामहि ॥74॥

kahi priya bacana sakhinha sana rāni bisūratī.
kahām̐ kaṭhina siva dhanuṣa kahām̐ mṛdu mūrati. 73.
jaur̐ bidhi lōcana atithi karata nahiṁ rāmahi.
tau kō'u nṛpahi na dēta dōṣu parināmahi. 74.

73-74. Saying pleasant words to her women friends, the queen became pensive and began to ponder, 'Why, there is this (hard and stern) bow of Lord Shiva on the one hand, and this tender, soft and delicate form (of Lord Ram) on the other hand. There is no match between the two. [There is no comparison between the delicate and tender body of Lord Ram with the rusty, creaky, old and stubborn gross form of a lifeless bow on which hinges the future of my daughter Sita. How ridiculous and incongruous it is. Say, why can't something be done which would prevent hinging Sita's future with this rusty and ugly bow, and instead link it to Lord Ram's lively and charming form?] (73)

If the creator had not created a situation where Lord Ram has come to visit us as our guest of honour, no one would have seen him, and no one would have then blamed king Janak for making a nonsense vow and putting the entire future of Sita on the wager.

[Sita's mother means that had Lord Ram not come visiting them, no one would have ever known that such a wonderful prince lived who should be married to Sita. In the absence of this knowledge, it would have been alright to choose a strong and powerful groom for Sita by testing his strength and prowess on the condition of lifting of the bow, as the king would have been justified to select a strong prince as his son-in-law. But the ground reality now is different. Now that we have Lord Ram in our midst, it is absurd to think of any other prince to be a groom for Sita.

But what is to be done now? The king has already declared that anyone who lifts and strings the bow will marry Sita, and being a king known to be truthful to his words it is unimaginable now that he would go back on his own vows. It is such a quagmire-like situation. Now everyone wants that Sita be betrothed to Lord Ram, and Janak's vow is becoming a thorn that prevents the fulfillment of this unanimous desire of the citizens. So everyone has started blaming the king of acting stubbornly and impractically. But say, what can the king do?

Had he known about Ram, he would not have held the bow ceremony at all, but would have rather invited this prince directly to accept the hands of Sita in marriage.]’ (74)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223.

Also, to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 79, 81-83.

Refer also to verse nos. 65-70 above, especially verse no. 69.]

अब असमंजस भयउ न कछु कहि आवै ।
रानिहि जानि ससोच सखी समझावै ।।75।।
देबि सोच परिहरिय हरष हियँ अनिय ।
चाप चढ़ाउब राम बचन फुर मानिय ।।76।।

aba asamanjasa bhaya'u na kachu kahi āvai.
rānihi jāni sasōca sakhī samajhāvai. 75.
dēbi sōca parihariya haraṣa hiyaṁ āniya.
cāpa caṛhā'uba rāma bacana phura māniya. 76.

75-76. The queen was in a quandary, saying—‘Now there is an immense dilemma, and everything is highly uncertain. Nothing can be said for sure’¹.

Seeing that the queen was immersed in deep thought (and on the horns of a dilemma), her companions tried to reassure her, saying (75)—‘Oh noble lady! Stop worrying. Be delighted at heart. Take this word as the truth that the bow will be lifted and strung by Sri Ram only (and by no one else).’² (76)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 in which Sita's mother laments “the ways of the creator are so quirky that one cannot know what will happen now”.

Her consternations however are made evident in a general way in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256.

The creator however has been praised for having created such a magnificent form of Lord Ram as well as that of Sita with a view that they would be brought together to complement each other at some future time, and this ‘time’ has arrived, and therefore

there is no worry. It is certain that Sita would be married with Ram—refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 77; and verse no. 79, stanza no. 3.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 222 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8 the creator has been praised by the citizens of Janakpur for having created a situation whereby it was made possible for them to see Lord Ram in their midst at such a close quarter, something that would be unimaginable for them otherwise.

Refer also to Chanda no. 9 above.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 256—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 223, the womenfolk of Janakpur assure each other by saying—“Look friend. Some people say that they (Ram and Laxman) have great glory and immense potentials though they look ordinary and humble. Will that Lord who had liberated Ahilya, the wife of sage Gautam, from her curse which had turned her into a stone by the mere touch of the dust of his holy foot, thereby obliging her forever and making her full of gratitude for him, not break the bow of Shiva (to liberate Sita from her woes, agony, consternations and fears of an uncertain future)? Have a heart; it is certain to happen.”

Also, in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 81, Sita’s mother is assured by the wife of the royal priest that it is Lord Ram who will certainly break the bow, and so she must stop worrying.]

तीनि काल को ग्यान कौसिकहि करतल ।
 सो कि स्वयंबर आनिहि बालक बिनु बल ॥ 77 ॥
 मुनि महिमा सुनि रानिहि धीरजु आयउ ।
 तब सुबाहु सूदन जसु सखिन्ह सुनायउ ॥ 78 ॥

tīni kālā kō gyāna kausikahi karatala.
 sō ki svayambara ānihiṁ bālaka binu bala. 77.
 muni mahimā suni rānihi dhīraju āya'u.
 taba subāhu sūdana jasu sakhinha sunāya'u. 78.

77-78. [The companions of the queen mother comforted and reassured her that she need not worry about whether or not Lord Ram would be able to break the bow and marry Sita. They gave the following logic to prove their point—]

‘Sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) has knowledge of what happens in all the three periods of time (past, present, future). [The sage possessed mystical powers that enabled him to know all happenings, whether they happened in the past or in the near and far future. Nothing is hidden from him.]

Therefore, would he ever have brought these two boys to the Swayambar alongside him if he was not sure that there was going to be a positive outcome of the visit?

[Definitely no; the sage wouldn’t have come here with Ram and Laxman if he hadn’t known that some great news of grand success is in store for them, as it would be very insulting and demeaning for the sage and his reputation for not being able to reward the two princes adequately for protecting his fire sacrifice. Keeping mum by shying away from participating in an open competition is tantamount to accepting a silent defeat. How can such a great and renowned sage as Vishwamitra ever let that happen, especially when

he was the one who had begged king Dasrath to lend him the two princes inspite of the king's stiff opposition to his requests?

This was the opportunity for Vishwamitra to prove to the world why he had selected Ram and Laxman out of the countless kings and princes of the time to protect his fire sacrifice by making Ram accomplish a feat which no other king or prince would be able to achieve—and it was to lift the bow which no one else could as much as move for a fraction of an inch. This would give the sage the rare opportunity to say thanks to king Dasrath as well as to his two sons, Ram and Laxman—as this success will establish the glory and fame of the two brothers once and for all.

The uniqueness of this opportunity was that all the great and famed kings and princes of the time had assembled at one place, and when Ram would successfully lift, string and break the sturdy bow which all of them singly as well as together could not move a bit, it would certainly establish Lord Ram's glory in an unequivocal and irrefutable terms. What greater reward would a prince want, and what greater pride his father would have? If sage Vishwamitra was not sure that this will actually happen, it is definite he wouldn't have brought Ram and Laxman to the bow ceremony.

If Ram and Laxman went empty-handed from Janakpur without as much as being given a chance to try their hand at a competition where all the great kings and princes had assembled, and after doing so not being successful in it, would the sage not feel ashamed of himself that he did not adequately reward them for protecting his fire sacrifice? Should this happen it would be a great ignominy for the great sage who was famed world-wide as the one who possessed immense mystical powers and who could give boons. Would he not become a stock of laughter and ridicule in the world if he sat quietly watching and not enabling Ram to lift the bow when other kings had failed, because it would be equivalent to accepting his weakness and lack of mystical powers that he could not make Ram confident enough to successfully lift the bow?

The sage had been given a prominent seat, and imagine his shame if he would sit with a bowed head when king Janak started rebuking the kings and princes for their failure at lifting the bow. It will be accepting an obvious defeat by the sage if he did not stand up at that moment and order Ram to lift the bow; it would be a moral defeat for the sage, something that is unbelievable and unlikely to happen under any circumstance.

At the time of king Dasrath's reluctance of sending Lord Ram and Laxman with the sage, his court priest, sage Vasishtha, had explained to him that a great reward was in store for the two princes if they went along with Vishwamitra, that their fame is poised to spread far and wide if they obliged Vishwamitra by protecting his fire sacrifice from being defiled by the demons. Say, what bigger reward a teenaged prince can be given than his fame and glory as the most handsome prince who possessed matchless valour, prowess, strength and confidence be established in the presence of all the great kings and princes of the time in a manner that did not involve any physical duel, battle or bloodshed, and which had the additional trophy of getting the hands of the most beautiful princess of the time in marriage?

Therefore, the very fact that the great sage Vishwamitra had brought the two princes to Janakpur to attend the bow ceremony means that they will win this competition. And this implies that all the other kings and princes would lose it.

The sage is well aware of Sri Ram's potentials, prowess and strength. Otherwise he wouldn't have brought them here because he knew the qualities of the bow and the

stern vows which the king had made. He wouldn't have done anything to ridicule himself as well as Lord Sri Ram.

Hence, there is nothing to worry—as it sure that the bow will be lifted and stringed by the Lord, and that Sita would be betrothed to him.}]' (77)

Hearing the fame and potent of the sage, the queen (mother of Sita) felt reassured. Then the friends told her the episode of Subahu's slaying at the hands of Sri Ram¹. (78)

[Note—¹The demon Subahu was killed by Lord Ram using a fire-tipped arrow when the former came to defile sage Vishwamitra's fire sacrifice. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 210.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 83, stanza no. 2.]

सुनि जिय भयउ भरोस रानि हिय हरषइ ।
 बहुरि निरखि रघुबरहि प्रेम मन करषइ ॥79॥
 नृप रानी पुर लोग राम तन चितवहिं ।
 मंजु मनोरथ कलस भरहिं अरु रितवहिं ॥80॥

sunī jiya bhaya'u bharōsa rāni hiya haraṣa'i.
 bahuri nirakhi raghubarahi prēma mana karaṣa'i. 79.
 nrpa rānī pura lōga rāma tana citavahim.
 manjū manōratha kalasa bharahim aru ritavahim. 80.

79-80. Hearing it, the queen's heart found great solace and succour, and she felt delighted. Then she glanced once again at Sri Ram, and her heart and mind were thrilled. A surge of affectionate emotions flowed through her body. (79).

Presently, the king, the queen and the citizens are all intently watching Lord Sri Ram¹. Their mood swings between joy and melancholy, between hope and dismay as they are virtually swaying like a pendulum between the two extreme emotions of hope and expectation at one end, and despair and helplessness on the other end. [Once they are sure that Ram and Sita would be married, and then suddenly begin to doubt when they recollect the vow of king Janak which has tied the fate of Sita to the bow.]

It is like them repeatedly filling and then emptying a symbolic pitcher of hope and desire, at one moment expecting some auspicious turn of events and some sort of miracle to happen that fills them with joy and excitement, and at another moment losing hope and feeling dejected, melancholic and remorseful.

[In other words, once they feel that it is sure that Ram will break the bow and marry Sita, and then become sullen and gloomy at the thought that this appears unlikely in the situation where so many valiant kings and princes are vying with each other to lift the bow. Even if some of them fail, some other will be successful. And in this eventuality there is no hope ever of Ram being given a chance to lift and string the bow. This made them swing wildly between the emotions of hope and despair.]² (80)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 244 that says exactly the same thing.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 249 where the citizens are confused; (b) Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 where Sita's mother is filled with consternation; (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—Doha no. 258 where Sita herself is widely swaying between hope and desperation.

Refer also to Chanda no. 10 below.]

रितवहिं भरहिं धनु निरखि छिनु—छिनु निरखि रामहि सोचहिं ।
नर नारि हरष बिषाद बस हिय सकल सिवहिं सकोचहिं ॥
तब जनक आयसु पाइ कुलगुर जानकिहि लै आयऊ ।
सिय रूप रासि निहारि लोचन लाहु लोगन्हि पायऊ ॥10॥

chanda:

ritavahiṃ bharahiṃ dhanu nirakhi chinu-chinu nirakhi rāmahi sōcahiṃ.
nara nāri haraṣa biṣāda basa hiya sakala sivahiṃ sakōcahiṃ.
taba janaka āyasu pā'i kulagura jānakihi lai āya'ū.
siya rūpa rāsi nihāri lōcana lāhu lōganhi pāya'ū. 10.

Chanda 10. While glancing at the bow, they (citizens and the queen) fill and empty the symbolic pitcher of hope and expectations every now and then. They glance at Sri Ram and then despair in their hearts (that he will not get a chance to marry Sita because the nasty old bow is standing as an obstacle)¹.

All the men and womenfolk are moved by hope and delight on the one hand, and overcome with gloom and melancholy on the other hand. This virtually embarrasses Lord Shiva (because it is his bow that has become an instrument that causes so much agony and uncertainties for the citizens of Janakpur, and has been the cause of so much pain and anxiety for Sita as well as her mother).

[Lord Shiva is a great devotee of Lord Ram, and therefore he cannot do anything that harms the interest of his Lord, i.e. Lord Ram. Therefore Lord Shiva has already made up his mind that he will make it sure that none of the other kings and princes be able to lift the bow, and that it will become extremely light and fragile as soon as Ram touches it. So Lord Shiva wonders as to why these people are still so worried and anxious? It appears that the people are accusing him of not being favourable and causing them so much agony inspite of his decision to ensure victory for Ram. This is why Shiva is feeling embarrassed.]

Then, on the orders of Janak, the royal Guru named Shatanand brought Janki (Sita) to the venue. At that time, all those assembled got the reward of their eyes by beholding Sita who was a treasury of beauty and charm². (Chanda no. 10)

[Note—¹Refer: Verse no. 80 above.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 246—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 248.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 6.

(iii) Verse nos. 81-82 below.]

मंगल भूषन बसन मंजु तन सोहहिं ।
देखि मूढ़ महिपाल मोह बस मोहहिं ॥81॥
रूप रासि जेहि ओर सुभायँ निहारइ ।
नील कमल सर श्रेणि मयन जनु डारइ ॥82॥

maṅgala bhūṣana basana maṅju tana sōhahim.
 dēkhi mūrha mahipāla mōha basa mōhahim. 81.
 rūpa rāsi jēhi ōra subhāyam' nihāra'i.
 nīla kamala sara śrēni mayana janu ḍāra'i. 82.

81-82. Sita's charming body is adorned with auspicious clothes and precious ornaments befitting the occasion. Seeing her, the foolish kings in the assembly became extremely enchanted by her beauty, and were overcome with passion and delusions.

[The deluded kings thought that Sita was an ordinary princess, and that she is within reach now as it would be very easy to break the old and creaky bow and grab her hands in marriage. They did not know that Sita was an incarnation of goddess Laxmi, and that Lord Vishnu, Laxmi's eternal husband, is in their midst in the form of Lord Ram. They are said to be 'deluded' because the wise kings among them had already advised them that Lord Ram is the Father of the entire creation as he is the Supreme Being in a human form, and that Sita is the cosmic Mother being a personified form of Jagdamba, the Mother Goddess.]¹ (81)

In whatever direction Sita—who is a treasury of beauty and charm—glances in a natural way, it appears that Kamdeo-cupid showers a hail of arrows made of blue lotus in that direction.

[In other words, wherever Sita glances, all those who are sitting in that direction become thrilled and enamoured of her beauty. If her roving eyes fall even casually upon a king or prince, he gets excited and believes that she like him. In their enthusiasm the assembled kings and princes forget that it is but natural for Sita to see the assembly in a causal manner by looking in every direction, and it is but a mere chance that their eyes meet. But this does not mean that Sita like him or is enchanted by him. But they are so overcome with delusions and passions that they think that Sita had purposely seen him.]² (82).

[Note—Refer: ¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 246; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 247.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precedes Doha no. 248; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 257.]

छिनु सीतहि छिनु रामहि पुरजन देखहि ।
 रूप सील बय बंस बिसेष बिसेषहि ॥ 83 ॥
 राम दीख जब सीय सीय रघुनायक ।
 दोउ तन तकि तकि मयन सुधारत सायक ॥ 84 ॥

chinu sītahi chinu rāmahi purajana dēkhahim.
 rūpa sīla baya bansa bisēṣa bisēṣahim. 83.
 rāma dīkha jaba sīya sīya raghunāyaka.
 dō'u tana taki taki mayana sudhārata sāyaka. 84.

83-84. The citizens of the city glance at Sri Ram for one moment and at Sita the other moment. They laud their respective elegance, beauty, characters, demeanours and age, as well as the fame and glory of their respective clans.¹ (83)

When Lord Ram saw Sita and she saw him, it appeared that Kamdeo-cupid repeatedly glanced at them and began to ready his arrows (to shoot)². (84)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 249; (b) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 228—to Doha no. 234 which describe how Lord Ram and Sita were enamoured of each other when the Lord had gone to the royal garden to fetch flowers for sage Vishwamitra's prayers and had met Sita there. She had come to offer prayers to goddess Parvati to bless her with a groom suitable for her; (b) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 248 where Sita fixes her glance upon Ram in the venue of the bow ceremony; and (c) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259 where the condition of Sita is described when Lord Ram is urged by sage Vishwamitra to go and lift the bow and the Lord approaches it with a majestic gait.]

प्रेम प्रमोद परस्पर प्रगटत गोपहिं ।
जनु हिरदय गुन ग्राम थूनि थिर रोपहिं । 85 ।।
राम सीय बय समौ सुभाय सुहावन ।
नृप जोबन छबि पुरइ चहत जनु आवन । 86 ।।

prēma pramōda paraspara pragaṭata gōpahim.
janu hiradaya guna grāma thūni thira rōpahim. 85.
rāma sīya baya samau subhāya suhāvana.
nrpa jōbana chabi pura'i cahata janu āvana. 86.

85-86. Both of them (Sri Ram and Sita) try to conceal their joy and their sense of mutual love and affection for each other though it was very apparent by their external demeanours. It appears that they are silently trying to gauge each other's virtues and firmly establish them like strong pillars of mutual trust and affection in their hearts.¹ (85)

The age of Sri Ram and Sita are right and suitable for the occasion. [That is, both of them are of the right age for marriage.] It appears that a king symbolising youth (represented by Lord Ram) wishes to enter a city of beauty, charm and glamour (represented by Sita).² (86)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precedes Doha no. 230 that describe the enchantment of Lord Ram at the sight of Sita in the royal gardens; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precedes Doha no. 232 of Sita's enchantment with Ram. Refer also to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 259.

Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 71, stanza nos. 3-4 also.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 230.

Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 71, stanza nos. 2-4.]

The breaking of the Bow

On the D-day when the bow lifting and breaking ceremony was to be held, all the invited kings and princes as well as the citizens of Janakpur assembled at the venue. King Janak

invited sage Vishwamitra along with Lord Ram and Laxman and gave him a distinct seat of honour which was separate from the general seating arrangement for all the other invited kings and was at an elevated platform like the one that is usually reserved for some especially highly placed guest of honour¹.

King Janak then called his ministers and royal heralds who declared the vow of the king and the reason why the assembly has been called. They declared that anyone who lifts and breaks the bow of Lord Shiva will marry Sita².

Now, in the assembly there were all sorts of kings and princes. Some were wise and intelligent who could judge the situation and decided to refrain from attempting to lift the bow. There are some obvious reasons for this. For one, they had already heard that the entire city favoured Ram as the would-be groom³.

Second, when they saw that two wonderful and handsome young princes of the correct age were present in their midst, and instead of being seated along with the rest of the invited kings and princes they were given a high seat of honour to sit upon, and the fact that they were accompanied by a great sage of the stature of Vishwamitra, they made an intelligent deduction—that Janak had invited the rest of the kings as a mere formality, perhaps just to witness the ceremony, and that he had already made up his mind that the groom would be Ram or Laxman⁴.

This logic was bolstered because they thought that Janak had invited Vishwamitra to accompany Ram and Laxman to make sure that no one resisted or objected because the whole world knew the mighty sage and his immense mystical powers and would never ever dare to stand against the orders of Vishwamitra and invite his wrath. So the wise amongst the assembly decided to keep quiet. In fact, they even tried their best to dissuade others from being reckless and foolhardy, but the less wise kings and princes would not listen to them⁵.

These wise and good kings also realised that Sita was of too tender an age for them, and that it would look extremely odd and improper to even attempt to marry a girl who was so young in age as compared to them.

But, at the same time, there were also highly haughty and stupid kings in the gathering who did not want to accept defeat without trying, though it was certain that they would fail and that failure would mean utter humiliation and ignominy for them. So they got up with immense zeal and energy, went to the bow, tried their might against it, and being unable to move it even a fraction of an inch, returned to their seats with a long face and lowered head in shame and dishonour⁶.

These stupid kings had not realised that the situation was not in their favour, and they hadn't judged the mood of the people who were overwhelmingly in favour of Ram marrying Sita by lifting the bow. The invited kings must have known this because their retinue included their own spies who must have reported to them the happenings of the previous day when Ram and Laxman had gone for sight-seeing in Janakpur and the citizens had overwhelmingly favoured them as the would-be groom for Sita. The people had also prayed fervently to Lord Shiva to turn the events in favour of Ram because the bow belonged to him (Shiva), and if he decides in favour of Ram than no power on earth could make the bow move except Ram.⁷

Besides these two types of kings, there was a third category—those who either went to the bow, examined it carefully, and realizing that it was too much for them they returned to their seats even without attempting to lift it, or those who were so impotent

that they simply squirmed sheepishly in their seats, not even mustering enough guts to stand up and show their face in the assembly⁸.

When none of the assembled kings and princes could as much as move the bow even a fraction of a millimeter, king Janak was extremely exasperated, dismayed and frustrated as he was very worried about the future of his daughter Sita. He sternly rebuked the kings and went to the extent of calling them impotent. He beemoaned their lack of strength, valour and ardour, and angrily declared that had he known that the earth has no strong person on its surface he would not have organized the ceremony and invited such dysfunctional persons to make himself an object of mockery in this world.⁹

Janak made some scathing disparaging remarks against *all* the kings¹⁰. This enraged Laxman, the brother of Lord Ram as it implied that the Lord was also impotent and lacked strength. So Laxman got up and vented his anger in public, challenging Janak to take his words, but Lord Ram politely calmed him down.¹¹

Then sage Vishwamitra asked Lord Ram to fulfill the wish of Janak and remove his dilemma and consternations¹², whereupon Lord Ram went and lifted the bow, and then broke it into two halves in a thunderous roar¹³.

As soon as the bow broke, there was uproar of jubilation everywhere, on the land as well as in the sky, both of which erupted in joy and ecstasy¹⁴.

All these events are covered in Janki Mangal, from verse no. 87—to verse no. 114.

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 239 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8, and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 2—where Janak has sent his royal priest to bring Vishwamitra along with the two brothers to the venue.

In (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 244, and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 3 it is said that a special high seat that was superior to others was given by the king to the sage, along with Ram and Laxman to sit upon.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 250; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 7; verse no. 89, stanza nos. 1-3.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Doha no. 223; Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 70, 73-80.

⁴Refer—Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 66, stanza no. 3 which gives a direct hint of this conclusion by Janak.

⁵Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 64-65, verse no. 68, stanza no. 9; verse no. 77, stanza no. 3; and verse no. 86 which is very explicit in expressing Janak's inner wish to marry Sita with Ram; (iii) Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 15.

⁶Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 250—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 4-5.

⁷Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 223; again in Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 80, stanza no. 6; verse no. 81; verse no. 82, stanza no. 3; verse no. 84, stanza nos. 4-5; verse no. 85, stanza no. 1; verse no. 89, stanza no. 10.

⁸Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8.

⁹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 292; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 89, stanza nos. 5-7.

¹⁰Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 251; Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 252. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 89, stanza nos. 6-7.

¹¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 254. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 3; verse no. 89, stanza nos. 7-9.

¹²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 254. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 4; verse no. 89, stanza no. 11.

¹³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 254; from Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 261—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262; Doha no. 292 and its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-5. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza nos. 6-7; verse no. 91, stanza nos. 3-4; verse no. 92; verse no. 93, stanza nos. 1-2. (iii) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 10-11.

¹⁴Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 263. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 3; verse no. 94.]

सो छबि जाइ न बरनि देखि मनु मानै ।
सुधा पान करि मूक कि स्वाद बखानै ।। 87 ।।
तब बिदेह पन बंदिन्ह प्रगट सुनायउ ।
उठे भूप आमरषि सगुन नहिं पायउ ।। 88 ।।

sō chabi jā'i na barani dēkhi manu mānai.
sudhā pāna kari mūka ki svāda bakhānai. 87.
taba bidēha pana bandinha pragaṭa sunāya'u.
uṭhē bhūpa āmaraṣi saguna nahim pāya'u. 88.

87-88. It is not possible to describe that majestic and glorious scene (when the actual competition of lifting, stringing and breaking of the bow started). It was a very awe-inspiring, challenging and wonderful event, giving immense thrill, joy and delight to all those who witnessed it. Can a dumb man ever describe the taste of nectar after he has drunk it?

[Here, Tulsidas compares those who witnessed that scene with a dumb man who cannot ever describe how tasty the food was or how much he enjoyed it. Similarly, those who witnessed that event were unable to narrate its grandeur and charm. Tulsidas, who had been visualizing the entire event unfolding in the canvas of his mind, too is unable to fully describe it in words, for words have their own limitations and they cannot do justice to the feeling of joy and exhilaration that bubbled over when the citizens actually witnessed the event when Lord Ram had finally lifted and broken the bow to marry Sita, something they had so much wished to happen and dreamt of.] (87)

Then the royal heralds declared the vows made by Videh (king Janak). Hearing it, the assembled kings got up with great enthusiasm and zeal, each wanting to be the first to lift the bow, but there were no good and auspicious signs or omens to encourage them. (88)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 251.
(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84.
(iii) Kavitawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 8-9.]

नहि सगुन पायउ रहे मिसु करि एक धनु देखन गए।
टकटोरि कपि ज्यों नारियरु, सिरु नाइ सब बैठत भए॥
एक करहिं दाप, न चाप सज्जन बचन जिमि टारें टरै।
नृप नहुष ज्यों सब कें बिलोकत बुद्धि बल बरबस हरै॥११॥

chanda:

nahi saguna pāya'u rahē misu kari ēka dhanu dēkhana ga'ē.
ṭakaṭōri kapi jyauṁ nāriyaru, siru nā'i saba baiṭhata bha'ē.
ēka karahim dāpa, na cāpa sajjana bacana jimi ṭārēm ṭarai.
nrpa nahuṣa jyōm saba kēm bilōkata bud'dhi bala barabasa harai. 11.

Chanda 11. When the kings did not find any encouraging and auspicious sign, they made some excuse to save their faces and sat down in humiliation¹.

Some of them went near the bow to see it, touched and felt it but did not attempt to lift it, leaving it alone just like a monkey who feels the outer shell of a coconut and leaves it aside (because it knows that it is impossible for it to break the shell and reach for the delicious kernel inside it). Then they came back and sat down on their seats with a bowed head. [It ought to be noted here that these kings have been ridiculed by comparing them to a 'monkey'! This is because they were greedy and wanted to see the bow at close quarters to judge whether they can manage to lift it, but finding it beyond their means they returned with a monkey-like red face.]

Some of them came to the bow very enthusiastically, and tried their might against it with full zeal and energy, but the bow did not relent and it did not yield any ground to them, remaining as unmoving as ever just like a good and righteous man remains unmoving and steadfast in upholding his truthful words. In this way, their vanity and pretensions of strength and powers was trounced, making them look lusterless, impotent and wasted, with their energy and enthusiasm dissipated and intelligence turned around its head to make them look utterly stupid and ridiculous².

The entire event reminded the observers of the story of king Nahush³. (Chanda no. 11)

[Note—¹Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8 which endorses this view that the assembled kings shifted uncomfortably and squirmed in their seats, bent their heads low in shame and doubt as they did not have the confidence and guts to stand up and walk up to the bow only to face humiliation as they felt that they have no chance of lifting it and winning the competition.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 251, and Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 252 say “the king could not move the bow by a fraction of a millimeter, and thus humiliated and trounced by it they returned to their seats with bent heads in shame and dejection.”

The messengers of Janak who had gone to Ayodhya to invite king Dasrath, the father of Lord Ram, to come with the marriage party to attend the marriage ceremony at

Janakpur also reiterated this fact that none of the assembled kings and princes could as much as move the mighty bow a fraction of a millimeter—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 292 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 9 says “the kings bent their heads low in shame when they heard the challenge pronounced by the royal heralds of king Janak.”

The fact that they could not move the bow a bit is explicitly said in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 90, stanza no. 3-4, 7.

(iii) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse no. 10.

³King *Nahush* had gained the stature of Indra by his virtuous deeds. He expressed his desire to establish conjugal relationship with Indra’s wife Indrani. When he received her intimation of consent, he yoked sages and hermits to his shoulder-mounted carriage (i.e. a palanquin) to go to her. He did not even give a second thought to such a reprehensible act in his pride and haughtiness. At last, he became a python due to the curse of sage Agastya. This incident is cited here to indicate that these kings had a false sense of pride in their strength, powers and abilities. Though the signs were not good and their elderly counterparts had advised them to refrain from showing stupidity and recklessness, they did not listen and went to lift the bow. What was the result? Lord Shiva cursed them; the bow did not move. Just like the haughty king Nahush who wanted to have a conjugal relationship with the queen of the Gods known as Indrani, these low-witted kings wished to marry the Goddess of the whole world in the form of Sita, something that is unthinkable.

They had been warned that Sita was not an ordinary princess but Mother Goddess in a human form, but they were deluded, and this led to their extreme humiliation in the front of the huge assembly. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 245—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 246; (ii) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 266—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 267.]

देखि सपुर परिवार जनक हिय हारेउ ।
नृप समाज जनु तुहिन बनज बन मारेउ ।।89।।
कौसिक जनकहि कहेउ देहु अनुसासन ।
देखि भानु कुल भानु इसानु सरासन ।।90।।

dēkhi sapura parivāra janaka hiya hārē'u.
nrpa samāja janu tuhina banaja bana mārē'u. 89.
kausika janakahi kahē'u dēhu anusāsana.
dēkhi bhānu kula bhānu isānu sarāsana. 90.

89-90. Seeing this (that the kings could not move the bow a bit), Janak, along with the citizens and the royal family members, lost all hopes in their hearts, while the forest of lotuses represented by the assembly of great kings appeared to have been struck by frost.

[When Janak saw that none of the invited kings and princes could move the bow, let alone lift and string it, he was very very angry and upset. He was worried about the future of his daughter as he had tied her marriage to the lifting of the bow. Now, what shall he do?¹

Meanwhile, the kings and princes felt ashamed and humiliated. They returned to their seats with lowered heads in shame and ignominy². This situation is compared to a large number of lotus flowers that wither during severe cold when it frosts.] (89)

Then, Kaushik (Vishwamitra) said to Janak, ‘Give your orders (i.e. permission) let the sun of the solar-race (i.e. Sri Ram) have a look at Shiva’s bow.’

[In this book ‘Janki Mangal’, sage Vishwamitra has asked Janak to allow Ram to ‘see’, i.e. examine and tackle the bow. But in other texts of Tulsidas, the sage had directly ordered Lord Ram to go and break the bow and thereby remove the fears and sorrows in the heart of Janak.]³ (90)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 251—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 252; Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precedes Doha no. 292. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8; and verse no. 89, stanza nos. 5-7.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 251. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 84, stanza no. 8; and verse no. 89, stanza no. 5.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precedes Doha no. 254. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 4; and verse no. 89, stanza no. 11.]

मुनिबर तुम्हरे बचन मेरु महि डोलहिं ।
तदपि उचित आचरत पाँच भल बोलहिं ।।91।।
बानु बानु जिमि गयउ गवहिं दसकंधरु ।
को अक्नी तल इन सम बीर धुरंधरु ।।92।।

munibara tumharēm bacana mēru mahi ḍōlahim.
tadapi ucita ācarata pām̐ca bhala bōlahim. 91.
bānu bānu jimi gaya'u gavahim dasakandharu.
kō avanī tala ina sama bīra dhurandharu. 92.

91-92. Janak said—‘Oh sage! Even the mountains and the earth can move by your words, but still it is wise to act with prudence as the ‘Panchas’ (literally, the five noble and elderly persons of the society) praise such action. [In other words, though it is true that nothing is impossible if you want, but still elderly people say that one must consider the pros and cons of all decisions, and never act in haste. I say this because I have a great hesitation in my mind in allowing Ram to approach the bow and face humiliation by not being able to lift it. I am justified for harbouring this doubt, because—]

As the situation stands at present, even formidable warriors have quietly and stealthily escaped from the venue after it became clear to them that they wouldn’t be able to move the bow. Take for example Vanasur, the famed demon known for his strength, valour and power, who ran away hurriedly from here like an arrow shot from a bow. Then there is another mighty warrior known as Ravana (the invincible demon king of Lanka who had so much strength that he had once lifted Mt. Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva, on his shoulders) who too escaped stealthily and quietly went home in order to avoid public ridicule and humiliation by first going to attempt to lift the old and rusty bow and then returning empty-handed without even being able to move it an inch.

Say, who on this earth is as strong, powerful, courageous and valiant as these two warriors, Vanasur and Ravana. [Since even they have not dared to touch the bow and preferred to escape from here unnoticed to save their face from disgrace, it would not be wise to allow Sri Ram, who is so tender and young in age, and who seems to bear no resemblance to the robust and muscular bodies of these two warriors Vanasur and Ravana, to go and try to lift the bow and face certain humiliation. I don't want this to happen—especially when you are present here and have accompanied the two brothers. It would be very bad if Ram fails to lift the bow because you accompany him. I won't like this embarrassing situation to happen. So, please don't ask me to allow Ram to go to the bow and attempt to lift it!]¹ (91-92)

[Note—¹The same thing is said in Ram Charit Manas and Geetawali also.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 250; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 256; (c) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 292.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 86; and verse no. 89, stanza no. 2.]

पारबती मन सरिस अचल धनु चालक ।
हहिं पुरारि तेउ एक नारि ब्रत पालक ।। 93 ।।
सो धनु कहिय बिलोकन भूप किसोरहिं ।
भेद कि सरिस सुमन कन कुलिस कठोरहिं ।। 94 ।।

pārabatī mana sarisa acala dhanu cālaka.
hahim purāri tē'u ēka nāri brata pālaka. 93.
sō dhanu kahiya bilōkana bhūpa kisōrahim.
bhēda ki sirisa sumana kana kulisa kaṭhōrahim. 94.

93-94. [King Janak continuous to speak to sage Vishwamitra, expressing his strong reservations against allowing Lord Ram to attempt to lift the bow.]

'This bow is immovable like the steadiness of the heart and mind of Parvati (the divine consort of Lord Shiva, and the Mother Goddess). It can be moved (i.e. influenced) only by Lord Shiva himself if he wants so. But Shiva keeps the firm vow of being loyal to only one woman, and therefore he will not exert his influence on the 'mind and heart' of the bow to make it move.

[Here, the bow has been personified and is imagined to have a mind and heart like that of Shiva's consort named Parvati. The bow also 'belongs' to Shiva just like Parvati who also 'belongs' to him, being his eternal wife. Like Parvati the bow is also very faithful to Lord Shiva. Hence, if Shiva orders it to become light and move when Lord Ram touches it, it is certainly going to do so, but the problem is that Shiva won't order anything to the bow; he won't exert any influence upon the bow. It is as unmoving as the Mana—mind and heart—of Parvati.] (93)

You are asking this young prince (Lord Ram) who has a delicate constitution and a tender body to have a look at such a formidable bow. [In other words, you, sage Vishwamitra, expect Ram to lift the bow which has defeated all the strong warriors of the earth. How is it possible because Sri Ram has such a delicate frame, and his body is not as muscular as it is needed to be in order to lift this heavy bow.]¹

Say sage, is it possible that a most tender flower of the Sesame tree can ever pierce through even a small part of of Vajra, the formidably strong weapon of Indra that is considered to be toughest thing in existence?’

[Here, the bow is compared to Vajra, and Lord Ram’s delicate frame to the tender flower. Just as it is not possible for the flower to pierce the body of the Vajra, it is impossible for Ram to overcome the resistance of the bow to move.] (94)

[Note—¹In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand it is stated that the womenfolk of the city as well as Sita’s mother and Sita herself have great reservation as to whether Lord Ram would be able to lift and break the heavy and sturdy bow given the fact that he has a delicate constitution and a tender body—refer: (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 223 where the womenfolk express their reservations; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 2-3 that precedes Doha no. 256 where Sita’s mother is doubtful; and (iii) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258 where Sita herself is in confusion.]

रोम रोम छबि निंदति सोभ मनोजनि ।
देखिय मूरति मलिन करिय मुनि सो जनि । 95 ।।
मुनि हँसि कहेउ जनक यह मूरति सोहइ ।
सुमिरत सकृत् मोह मल सकल बिछोहइ । 96 ।।

rōma rōma chabi nindati sōbha manōjani.
dēkhiya mūrati malina kariya muni sō jani. 95.
muni hamśi kahē'u janaka yaha mūrati sōha'i.
sumirata sakṛta mōha mala sakala bichōha'i. 96.

95-96. The beauty, charm and majesty of each pore of Sri Ram’s body are such that they put to shame the beauty and glamour of numerous Kamdeo-cupids taken together. Oh sage! Do not do anything that will make this image look darkened and gloomy (because in case Ram is unable to break the bow, that would be devastating for the spell of charm that he has cast on all of us here in Janakpur, the way we are all thrilled by his majestic presence and enamoured of his magnificent beauty).’ (95)

The sage laughed and replied, ‘Oh Janak! The image (form of Lord Ram) which looks grand and adorable is also capable of eliminating the darkness of ignorance even by remembering it only once. [In other words, don’t think that Ram is an ordinary prince. This physical image that looks so charming to you is also capable of eliminating the darkness created by delusions and ignorance—because, oh king, Ram is a personified form of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. So you need not worry. Remember, I am not an ordinary sage, and when I endorse something I am fully aware of my immaculate reputation as the teller of truth. Therefore, you need not harbour any more doubts in your mind and heart. It is in your ignorance that you say that Ram may not break the bow. Let this charming image also charm your inner being, so to say, by eliminating its darkness of doubts and worries.]’ (96)

[Note—Refer also to Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 86, stanza no. 6; verse no. 87.]

सब मल बिछोहनि जानि मूरति जनक कौतुक देखहू ।
धनु सिंधु नृप बल जल बढ्यो रघुबरहि कुंभज लेखहू ।।
सुनि सकुचि सोचहिं जनक गुर पद बंदि रघुनंदन चले ।

नहि हरष हृदय बिषाद कछु भए सगुन सुभ मंगल भले ।।12।।

chanda:

saba mala bichōhani jāni mūrati janaka kautuka dēkhahū.
dhanu sindhu nr̥pa bala jala baṛhaīō raghubarahi kumbhaja lēkhahū.
suni sakuci sōcahiṁ janaka gura pada bandi raghunandana calē.
nahiṁ haraṣa hr̥daya biṣāda kachu bha'e saguna subha maṅgala bhalē. 12.

Chanda 12. 'Oh Janak! Consider this divine image (of Lord Ram) as being potent enough (i.e. empowered) to remove all sorts of (spiritual) faults, shortcomings, blemishes and defects (that inherently taint the mind and heart of all creatures), and watch this wonderful spectacle unfold before your eyes.

In this bow-like ocean, the water symbolising the strength of these vane kings and princes is in a high tide. Regard Raghubir (Sri Ram) as being equivalent to sage Agastya¹ (who would now dry up this symbolic water of haughtiness and vanity of these proud kings and princes by breaking the bow after all of them have finished trying their might and failing to move it even a bit).

[Just sit back, relax and enjoy; don't be perturbed or exasperated. Watch calmly as Lord Ram breaks the bow, and then watch the reaction on the kings and princes. Watch their long faces as they shrivel up and wither in humiliation, ignominy and shame when the bow finally breaks.]²

Hearing this, Janak became hesitant, unable to decide what to do. He pondered over the matter even as Lord Sri Ram bowed at the feet of his Guru (Vishwamitra) to pay his obeisance and started to walk towards the bow³. The Lord was emotionless and calm; he had no disturbances in his mind. He was neither joyful at having got this opportunity, nor apprehensive and doubtful at the outcome. He neither exulted nor sulked.

When he moved towards the bow majestically, there were many auspicious signs and good omens portending good tidings and indicating success. (Chanda no. 12)

[Note—¹Sage Agastya—This sage had once gulped down the ocean. Sage Vishwamitra cites his instance to stress upon king Janak that just like Agastya had effortlessly emptied the ocean of its water, thereby vanquishing its pride as the 'mighty ocean' and the 'greatest reservoir of water on earth', Lord Ram would too vanquish the pride of these kings and princes as well as of the bow of being strong and powerful by breaking the bow easily and effortlessly. So the king need not worry.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 256.

The brief story of sage Agastya is as follows—He is a renowned sage who had composed several of the hymns of the Rig Veda, e.g. Rig Veda Sanhita, 1/166-191. He is known as a 'Brahm-rishi' or a celestial sage tracing his origin to the creator Brahma.

He was born to sage Pulastya and his wife Havirbhuk. During this birth, his other brother was sage Visrawaa. It is also believed that in the Swayambhu Manvantar (age of Manu named Swambhu), he was born as the son of sage Pulastya, but in that birth he was named Dattoli.

According to another version, he was the son of Mitra and Varuna. In this version, he was born in a jar or pitcher known as 'Kumbha'. Hence, he is also known as Kumbhaja (born out of a Kumbha), Kumbhodbhava (rising out of a Kumbha), Kalasi-suta (son born from a Kalas or a pitcher or jar). During this birth, his twin brother was sage Vashistha,

the great sage who was the court priest of the kingdom of Ayodhya where Lord Ram was the king.

His wife was a princess of the kingdom of Vidharva, and her name was Lopaamudraa, also known as Kaaveri. The sage had a son whose name was Drudhaasya, also known as Idhmavaaha.

His chief disciple was Agniveshya.

Sage Agastya did severe Tapa and had vast knowledge. He is said to have destroyed the two demons named Ilvala and Vaataapi. The sage had stunted the growth of Mt. Vindhya which was growing and expanding endlessly so much so as to obstruct the light of the sun.

Once, when Indra had killed the demon Vrittaasur, other demons named 'Kaaleya' managed to escape and they hid themselves under the water of the ocean. From there they began terrorizing the sages and seers. They stayed under water during daytime and came out at night to torment and devour these sages, and generally cause nuisance and havoc all around. These demons had not spared even such renowned sages of the time as Vashistha, Chyavan and Bharadwaj, because the demons attacked their hermitages and killed the sages and seers who lived there. It was then that the Gods, led by their king Indra, requested sage Agastya to somehow expose the demons. At this, the sage had scooped up the water of the ocean in a cup made by joining the two palms of his hands and had drunk the water of the ocean in one gulp so as to expose the demons. The Gods were then able to destroy them. Some of the demons however managed to escape and hid themselves in the nether world. This is how the demon race survived then. However, when the ocean was completely dried up it created another problem for the world because countless marine creatures begin to suffer and die. Besides this, the ocean was the largest natural reservoir of water on earth. So the Gods requested sage Agastya to refill it. The sage replied that the water has been digested in his stomach, but he can oblige the Gods by reproducing the ocean in the form of urine. That is the reason, according to this legendary story of the Purans, why the ocean is salty and sour—because it is the urine of sage Agastya.

This fact, that the ocean is sour and salty because it is the urine of sage Agastya, is explicitly narrated in the *Anand Ramayan* (purported to have been written by sage Valmiki), in its Vilaas Kand (Chapter), ninth Sarga (Canto), verse nos. 18-24 where Sita explains to Lopaamudraa, the wife of sage Agastya, why Sri Ram had constructed the bridge in order to cross the ocean to reach Lanka. She explained that the Lord did not ask the sage to dry up the ocean once again by drinking its water because it would be unthinkable to ask the sage to drink his own urine. Even if the sage had actually drunk the water, the Lord would be heaped with the ignominy of being so selfish that he made a Brahmin drink his own urine so that his purpose is served. The Lord did not swim across the ocean because it would be insulting and extremely demeaning for the Lord to swim in urine, and it would also be improper for him to step across a Brahmin's urine because it is to be regarded as holy as the urine of a cow.

There is a legendary story how once sage Agastya had converted king Nahush as a serpent. The story goes that once Indra, the king of Gods, was demoted from his exalted stature due to the curse of killing some Brahmins, and king Nahush had taken his place. Nahush lustfully eyed the consort of Indra, named Indrani. To punish him, Brihaspati, the moral preceptor of Gods, devised a stratagem by which Indrani requested Nahush to come to her riding a palanquin that was never used by anyone earlier. Overcome and blinded by passions, Nahush forgot everything about propriety and probity, and he summoned all the great sages and seers of the time to act as carriers or bearers of his palanquin. Humble sages and seers did not mind because Nahush was now elevated to the stature of Indra, the king of Gods. Nahush was so eager to reach heaven as quickly as

possible that he kept prodding and scolding these sages to walk faster. Enraged, astonished and peeved at this nonsense being perpetrated by the haughty king, sage Agastya had then cursed him to become a great and poisonous snake. This story appears in Mahabharat, Anushaashan Parva, 99-100.

Sage Agastya lived in the Dandakaaranya forest when Lord Ram met him. The sage had then given some invincible divine weapons to the Lord which stood him in good stead during the epic war of Lanka, as well as in overcoming the demons whom the Lord encountered and destroyed during his sojourn in the formidable forest.

The sage is said to have brought about reconciliation between Indra, the king of Gods, and Maruts, the Wind Gods.

A whole class of people came to be known after him, and in due course the term 'Agastya' became a title and sort of honour given to learned sages and seers who were experts in the philosophy and knowledge that sage Agastya was an expert in and had preached during his lifetime. The sage has been made immortal by finding a place amongst the brightest stars in the sky. He is identified with Canopus, which is the brightest star in the sky of south India. The Canopus has been named after this sage as 'Agastya', and seeing this star in the sky when the sun is in the middle of Virgo (Kanyaa) sign of the zodiac and worshipping him at night is regarded as an auspicious deed. This is a symbolic way of honouring the sage by elevating him to an exalted stature of a 'bright star' and recognizing his stellar qualities.

He is regarded as the one who had created the Tamil language of South India. He is accredited as being the author of several treatises on medicine, mysticism and magic. One of his books is the 'Agastya Sanhita' which elaborately deals with ritualistic forms of worship.

It is said that once sage Agastya and the noble king named Shankha had a divine vision of Lord Vishnu at the banks of river Swami-pushkarni.

²This is exactly what happened at the instant the bow broke. The assembled kings and princes made a long face, and they literally buried their faces in their hands to hide their shame and humiliation. All their sense of majesty and grandeur vanished in thin air. The night representing their hopes of marrying Sita was obliterated with the rise of the splendorous sun represented by Lord Ram; those amongst the kings who were haughty became dejected and lack-lustre like the lotus flower that closes as soon as the sun rises in the eastern horizon, and wicked ones hid themselves like owls.

Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 255; (b) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 86, stanza no. 6; and verse no. 93, stanza no. 2.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 254 that clearly state that when sage Vishwamitra ordered to Ram to get up and break the bow to remove the grief of Janak, the Lord got up calmly without having any emotions, either of joy or of reluctance; (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-5 that precede Doha no. 255 say that the Lord walked towards the bow calmly and without showing any nervousness or emotions; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 85, stanza no. 4.]

बरिसन लगे सुमन सुर दुंदुभि बाजहिं ।
मुदित जनक, पुर परिजन नृपगन लाजहिं ।।97।।
महि महिधरनि लखन कह बलहि बढावनु ।
राम चहत सिव चापहि चपरि चढावनु ।।98।।

barisana lagē sumana sura dundubhi bājahiṁ.
 mudita janaka, pura parijana nṛpagana lājahiṁ. 97.
 mahi mahidharani lakhana kaha balahi baṛhāvanu.
 rāma cahata siva cāpahi capari caṛhāvanu. 98.

97-98. The Gods started raining flowers and sounding their kettle-drums in the sky (when Lord Ram moved towards the bow). Janak, the citizens of the city, and the close relatives (of Sita) became exhilarated in their minds and hearts, while the assembled kings felt very humiliated, dejected and ashamed¹. (97)

Laxman asked the earth and Sheshnath (the legendary serpent who holds the earth on its thousand hoods) to be prepared and girdled-up because Sri Ram will soon lift and string the bow, which is bound to be followed by an uproarious thunder and violent vibrations as the bow breaks. [Laxman alerted them to brace themselves for the violent tremors and the earthquake that would follow the breaking of the bow. This was necessary, lest the whole earth would topple over on its side and sink into the vast cosmic ocean.]² (98)

[Note—¹Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 1 also endorses the showering of the flowers and playing of the musical instruments by the Gods in the moments leading upto the breaking of the formidable bow. It also says that joyful excitement permeated throughout the city of Janakpur as the citizens anticipated that Lord Ram would certainly break the bow.

In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza nos. 3-4 it is said that the Gods showered flowers on Lord Ram just during the moments before the Lord actually broke the bow when they observed that the bow was reducing in size and preparing itself to be broken while Lord Ram went around it to circumambulate in order to pay his respects to it.

However, in Ram Charit Manas, the Gods have showered flowers and played their musical instruments only after the bow was broken. However, as soon as Lord Ram stood up to proceed towards the bow, there was immense excitement amongst the citizens who prayed feverishly to the gods and asking them to pawn all their good deeds to ensure that the bow becomes light and Ram breaks it easily—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 255.

Sita too prayed fervently to goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva, as well as to the bow itself—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 250.

Sita's mother too was very nervous as she hoped for the best—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 257.

²Laxman has warned Seshnath as well as Kurma, the tortoise, also to become alert. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 259—to Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 260; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 1.]

गए सुभायँ राम जब चाप समीपहि ।
 सोच सहित परिवार बिदेह महीपहि ।।99।।
 कहि न सकति कछु सकुचति सिय हियँ सोचइ ।
 गौरि गनेस गिरीसहि सुमिरि सकोचइ ।।100।।

ga'ē subhāyam̐ rāma jaba cāpa samīpahi.
 sōca sahita parivāra bidēha mahīpahi. 99.
 kahi na sakati kachu sakucati siya hiyam̐ sōca'i.
 gauri ganēsa girīsahi sumiri sakōca'i. 100.

99-100. When Sri Ram reached the bow in a calm and composed manner, king Videh (Janak), along with his family members (such as his queen and mother of Sita), became very thoughtful and worried¹.

[The king was naturally worried about the outcome as the future of his daughter hinged on it. He very much wanted Lord Ram to break the bow, but was in doubt because of the Lord's tender age and delicate frame as compared to the robust and muscular bodies of all the other kings and princes. But sage Vishwamitra had already assured him not to worry.] (99)

Sita was unable to say anything openly out of hesitation because it was an established tradition that a bride is not supposed to speak in public. She however became remorseful in her heart, remembering and invoking urgently goddess Gauri (Parvati), Lord Ganesh and Lord Shiva simultaneously (to help her out of this muddle by making it possible for Lord Ram to break the bow and settle her future).²

[Sita was hesitant because she was uncertain whether they will answer her prayers or not; she does not know what is in store in her destiny. She prayed earnestly and urgently because there was no time to procrastinate any further. It was a do or die situation for her. Sri Ram was her true and one love, and her union with him now depended on such a ridiculous condition as the breaking of a bow. She felt exasperated and frustrated beyond measure but could not gather courage to speak to her father to abandon his incredulous vows and let her marry the groom of her choice. The only avenue left for her was to pray to the patron Gods and Goddesses of the clan i.e. Lord Shiva and Parvati, beseeching them to intercede on her behalf and ensure that she get her beloved's hand in marriage.

Her dilemma is similar to that of Parvati who has to take the permission of her father Himvan to marry Shiva. Please see Parvati Mangal, verse no. 23 and Chanda 9. This book is published by me separately in this series, as Book no. 5.] (100)

[Note—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 261 describe succinctly the consternations and worries swirling in the mind of the citizens as well as Janak and Sita.

¹Refer also: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 252 that describes the grief and worry of the citizens; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 252 that describes the grief and worry of Janak who says sadly that now it is clear that Sita will remain unmarried; and (c) Doha no. 255—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 256 that describe the grief and worry of Sita's mother.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 79, stanza no. 2 with reference to the citizens; verse no. 81 with reference to Sita's mother; and verse nos. 86-87 with reference to the Janak.

²Sita's consternation is narrated in: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 257—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 259; (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 91, stanza no. 3.

Refer also verse no. 101 below.]

होत बिरह सर मगन देखि रघुनाथहि ।
 फरकि बाम भुज नयन देत जनु हाथहि ॥101॥
 धीरज धरति सगुन बल रहति सो नाहिन ।
 बरु किसोर धनु घोर दइउ नहिं दाहिन ॥102॥

hōta biraha sara magana dēkhi raghunāthahi.
 pharaki bāma bhuja nayana dēta janu hāthahi. 101.
 dhīraja dharati saguna bala rahati sō nāhina.
 baru kisōra dhanu ghōra da'i'u nahim dāhina. 102.

101-102. Watching Sri Ram, she (Sita) appears to drown in the ocean of uncertainties that resulted in great anguish, despair and dejection in her mind¹. At that time her left arms and eyelids fluttered as if they were extending their hands of reassurance and support to her (and trying to salvage her from drowning in an ocean of despair and hopelessness)².

[When the left arm and eyelids of a woman flutter it is seen as a good sign. So, amid all the despair and gloom, this sign gave hope and expectation to Sita.] (101)

These auspicious signs made her gather some courage, but it did not last long. [She thought—] ‘The groom is of a young age while the bow is most formidable and huge. The creator is most unfavourable and antagonised towards me now.’³ (102)

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 100 above along with the note appended to it.

²In Ram Charit Manas it is said that when Sita had prayed to goddess Parvati earlier to find a good and suitable groom for her, the left arm and the left eyelids began to flutter, indicating to her that things will turn out in her favour—refer: Baal Kand, Doha no. 236.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 258; (ii) Geetawali, verse no. 78, stanza no. 3.

The sturdiness of the bow and it being as hard as Vajra is also endorsed in verse no. 94 of the present book ‘Janki Mangal’.]

अंतरजामी राम मरम सब जानेउ ।
 धनु चढ़ाइ कोतुकहिं कान लागि तानेउ ॥103॥
 प्रेम परखि रघुबीर सरासन भंजेउ ।
 जनु मृगराज किसोर महाराज भंजेउ ॥104॥

antarajāmī rāma marama saba jānē'u.
 dhanu caṛhā'i kōtukahim kāna lagi tānē'u. 103.
 prēma parakhi raghubīra sarāsana bhanjē'u.
 janu mṛgarāja kisōra mahārāja bhanjē'u. 104.

103-104. When Lord Ram reached the bow, he glanced at Sita (also known as Janki as she was the daughter of Janak). Intuitively he recognized what was going on inside her mind and heart because the Lord is ‘all-knowing’, and therefore he knows the inner thoughts of the other person¹. So, the Lord lifted the bow in a playful manner (i.e. without any effort, easily, cheerfully and playfully), stringed it, and then pulled the string back right upto his ears (thereby bending the bow).

[Lord Ram realised the emotional upheaval going on inside Sita. He could make it out from her face and her demeanours. The Lord saw that Sita was praying fervently to

Lord Shiva and goddess Parvati to make it possible for him to break the bow. Sita's anxiousness and a strong desire to have him as her groom were evident from her expressions. Lord Ram wanted to ascertain the wishes of Sita before he would touch the bow, but when he found that Sita longed to have him as her groom, he made a final decision of lifting the bow. Not only this, the Lord stringed it and then pulled its string back upto his ears in a mode that is done when one shoots an arrow from a bow.] (103)

After having ascertained the intensity and sincerity of love and affection that Sita had for him, Raghubir (the brave warrior of king Raghu's dynasty; Lord Sri Ram) broke the bow just like a lion's cub kills a huge elephant.

[The lion jumps on the back of an elephant and kills it. Here, Lord Ram is compared to the lion's cub because just like the cub being the son of the king of the forest, the lion, Lord Ram is also a 'son of a king, king Dasrath of the Raghu dynasty', and the bow is compared to the mighty elephant.] (104)

[Note—¹An identical account of this incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas as well as Geetawali. Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 261. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 3.

The breaking of the bow has been described elsewhere also in Geetawali, Baal Kand. Refer; verse no. 90, stanza no. 6; verse no. 93-94.]

गंजेउ सो गर्जेउ घोर धुनि सुनि भूपि भूधर लरखरे।
रघुबीर जस मुक्ता बिपुल सब भुवन पटु पेटक भरे॥
हित मुदित अनहित रुदित मुख छबि कहत कबि धनु जाग की।
जनु भोर चक्क चकोर कैरव सघन कमल तड़ाग की॥13॥

chanda:

ganjē'u sō garjē'u ghōra dhuni suni bhūpi bhūdhara larakharē.
raghubīra jasa mukatā bipula saba bhuvana paṭu pēṭaka bharē.
hita mudita anahita rudita mukha chabi kahata kabi dhanu jāga kī.
janu bhōra cakka cakōra kairava saghana kamala tarāga kī. 13.

Chanda 13. When the bow was broken, there was such a terrible roar and a thunderous snapping sound that the earth and the mountains shook and trembled¹.

Treasure chests represented by all the worlds appeared to get filled with the pearls symbolising the glory and fame of Raghubir (Sri Ram)². [That is, this tremendous feat of Lord Ram of having successfully broken a bow that had defied the might of all other great kings of that time instantly spread his glory far and wide in all the corners of the world. In this stanza, Lord Ram's great deeds and his countless other virtues are likened to the priceless pearls, and the different corners of the world to different treasure chests. The Lord's glories were so huge and countless that all such chests were filled and brimming over. In other words, the Lord's glories and fame resounded in all the corners of the world so much that nothing else was heard at that time.]

This caused immense exultation, exhilaration and joy amongst friendly people³, while the face of those who were inimical and jealous became dejected, gloomy and remorseful⁴.

[The citizens and some of the wise kings erupted in joy, while the kings who had wanted to break the bow and marry Sita obviously felt dejected and sullen.]

The poet (Tulsidas) attempts to describe the scene at that moment at the venue of the bow-breaking ceremony by comparing it with the natural scene witnessed at dawn at a pond/lake which has a large number of lotus flowers as well as water lilies, and where large flocks of birds known as Chakors as well as pairs of Chakvas and Chakvis⁵ abound.

[At day-break, the lotus begins to open its petals and pairs of Chakvas and Chakvis begin to hop around joyfully. They represent friendly people and wise kings who felt happy and cheerful at the good development of Lord Ram successfully breaking the bow.

On the other hand were inimical people such as the jealous kings and princes who felt very sad and exasperated when Ram broke the bow. Their gloom and desperation is compared to the water lily and the Chakor which feel gloomy as the sun begins to rise.

Here, the 'sun' is the glory of Lord Ram and his success at establishing himself as the greatest warrior of all times by being able to break a bow that none of the kings and princes could as much as move even a fraction of an inch.

As soon as it became clear that Ram is the successful candidate who will get the hands of Sita in marriage, the defeated kings felt gloomy like the bird known as Chakor that feels upset when the sun rises as it prefers the moon to the sun, as well as the water lily which shrivels up when the sun rises.

In contrast, the citizens of Janakpur, the gods as well as wise kings who had decided not to go near the bow, felt happy like the Chakvi and Chakva as well as the lotus flower which opens its petals at the sight of the sun to indicate that it is feeling cheerful at seeing the face of the sun.] (Chanda no. 13)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 261 along with its preceding Chandas and Chaupai line no. 8. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza no. 5. And (iii) Kavitaawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 11.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 262. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 93, stanza no. 3.

³Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 263. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 91, stanza no. 4; verse no. 92, stanza no. 4; verse no. 93, stanza nos. 1, 3; and verse no. 94.

⁴Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 263; Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 266. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 94, stanza no. 2; and verse no. 95, stanza no. 1.

⁵Refer: Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 95, stanza no. 4 which says exactly the same thing.

(a) Chakor = Indian red legged partridge which is said to be enamoured of the moon and shuns the sun; (b) Chakava = An ostrich like bird; (c) Chakvi = Female Chakava.]

नभ पुर मंगल गान निसान गहागहे ।
देखि मनोरथ सुरतरु ललित लहालहे ।।105 ।।
तब उपरोहित कहेउ सखीं सब गावन ।
चलीं लेवाइ जानकिहि भा मन भावन ।।106 ।।

nabha pura maṅgala gāna nisāna gahāgahē.
 dēkhi manōratha surataru lalita lahālahē. 105.
 taba uparōhita kahē'u sakhīm saba gāvana.
 calīm lēvā'i jānakihi bhā mana bhāvana. 106.

105-106. Both in the city as well as in the sky, there was a tumultuous cacophony of sound of merry singing of auspicious songs and beating of musical instruments such as the kettle-drums when everyone found that the beautiful Kalpa Tree (which is the all wish-fulfilling tree of Gods; the *Nyctanthes arbor tristis* tree) representing fulfilled desires has bloomed.

[When Lord Ram broke the bow, it signaled the fulfillment of desire of everyone, whether it were the citizens, king Janak, Sita and his mother, or even the Gods, that Ram should become the groom for Sita. The 'Kalpa Tree' is a metaphor used in classical literature to indicate fulfillment of desires and wishes. Therefore, as soon as Ram snapped the bow, the city and the sky erupted in spontaneous cheering. There was joyous singing and enthusiastic playing of musical instruments almost instantaneously.] (105)

The royal priest (named Shatanand) ordered all the companions and friends of Sita to sing auspicious songs befitting the occasion. So, all of them started singing merrily in unison as they took her with them to the place where Lord Ram stood majestically after breaking the bow (so that Sita could put the victory garland around the Lord's neck and declare her marriage with him). In this way, Sita's heart-felt wish that she be married to Ram was fulfilled. (106)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 262—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265; (b) Doha no. 285—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 286; (c) Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 311.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza nos. 4-5; verse no. 93, stanza no. 1; verse no. 94; verse no. 96, stanza nos. 2-5.]

कर कमलनि जयमाल जानकी सोहइ ।
 बरनि सकै छबि अतुलित अस कबि कोहइ ॥107॥
 सीय सनेह सकुच बस पिय तन हेरइ ।
 सुरतरु रुख सुरबेलि पवन जनु फेरइ ॥108॥

kara kamalani jayamāla jānakī sōha'i.
 barani sakai chabi atulita asa kabi kōha'i. 107.
 sīya sanēha sakuca basa piya tana hēra'i.
 surataru rukha surabēli pavana janu phēra'i. 108.

107-108. The 'Jaimaal' (victory garland) looks most adorable in Janki's (Sita's) hands. Say, which poet can ever describe that indescribable and incomparable scene¹?

[The sight of Sita standing with the victory garland in her hands was so fabulous and grand that no poet can ever be able to describe its magnificence and beauty though usually they are thought to be skilled in the use of words and experts in describing the beauty of Nature. But that scene defied their expertise and skill as it is beyond description in words. It ought to be noted that Tulsidas has liberally employed the 'present tense' in

his narrative to indicate that whatever he says is being revealed to him on the canvas of his mind like a live video of events that actually happened thousands and thousands of years ago. Well, this is the standard technique employed by all great bards whose narratives are so vivid and lively that they transport the reader to the actual moment when the event was taking place.] (107)

Sita looks affectionately but hesitantly towards her beloved (i.e. Lord Ram)² as if a soft wind is trying to move a delicate creeper nearer to the Kalpa Tree.

[Here, Sita is compared to the ‘creeper’, and Lord Ram to the Kalpa Tree. Sita’s wish was to get close to Lord Ram permanently, and live with the Lord for the rest of her life just like the creeper that survives only when it wraps around the tree. The ‘soft wind’ here refers to the good turn of events that has enabled this to happen. It also may refer to the summons of the royal priest, Shatanand, inviting Sita with the victory garland to be put around the neck of Lord Ram.

There is yet another way of interpreting this verse. When Sita approaches Lord Ram, she is full of emotions. Anxiety, helplessness and desperation have given way suddenly to happiness, success and fulfillment. She seems overwhelmed and overjoyed, not knowing what to say and how to react. As she approaches Lord Ram, her eyes flicker, once looking at the Lord’s charming face and then looking away. She hesitates to gaze at the Lord because it would be too immodest to do so, but at the same time she is unable to resist the desire to see the Lord’s charming and handsome form. This constant flickering of her sight is compared to the swaying of the creeper as it is buffeted by the wind—once moving closer to the trunk of the Kalpa Tree and then moving slightly away from it. In this comparison, the ‘wind’ would be the changing emotions of Sita—once impelling her to fix her sight on her beloved by foregoing formalities and neglecting social niceties, and then deterring her from doing so as it would be deemed immodest and against traditions for a young girl to look at another person so intently.] (108)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 264. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 1.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3, 6 that precede Doha no. 264. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 92, stanza nos. 4-5; verse no. 93, stanza no. 1; verse no. 94; verse no. 96, stanza nos. 2-5.]

लसत ललित कर कमल माल पहिरावत ।
काम फंद जनु चंदहि बनज फँसावत ।।109 ।।
राम सीय छबि निरुपम निरुपम सो दिनु ।
सुख समाज लखि रानिन्ह आनँद छिनु—छिनु ।।110 ।।

lasata lalita kara kamala māla pahirāvata.
kāma phanda janu candahi banaja phamśāvata. 109.
rāma sīya chabi nirupama nirupama sō dinu.
sukha samāja lakhi rāninha ānamda chinu-chinu. 110.

109-110. The most fascinating sight of Sita putting the garland around the neck of Lord Ram resembled the scene when of a lotus flower traps the beautiful face of the full moon in a snare belonging to Kamdeo-cupid¹.

While she (Sita) was putting the garland around Lord Sri Ram's neck, she looked most adorable as if the lotus traps the moon in the snare of Kamdeo-cupid.

[This is a fine example of excellent imagery. The lotus flower is compared to Sita here, and Lord Ram's beautiful face to the full moon. When Sita lifted her arms to put the garland around Lord Ram's neck, the face of the Lord was framed within her arms as well as the garland they held. It appeared that one was viewing the full moon through the loop formed by the bent stem of a beautiful lotus flower.

This view is invoked here by Tulsidas to describe the beauty of the instant when Sita had lifted her delicate hands to put the garland around the neck of Lord Ram. At that specific moment, Lord Ram's face was cupped within the two extended arms of Sita as she lifted the garland to put it around the neck of the Lord, and the Lord had to bend his face a bit and hold it closer to Sita's face to facilitate her doing it. At the same time as Sita's arms circling Lord Ram's face, the Lord's face was also framed by the garland as it was being moved over his head to be placed around the neck.

The garland and the fair complexion of Sita's arms are compared to the lotus flower, while the face of Lord is likened to the full moon. Sita's face is like the face of Kamdeo-cupid, and the mutual love and affection that the Ram and Sita had for each other is the 'snare' of Kamdeo who is the patron god of love and desires.

Another way of looking at this verse is as follows: The hands of Sita that held the garland are like the beautiful lotus flower with its curved stem, Lord Sri Ram's face is equivalent to the full moon, and the garland itself is the snare of Kamdeo-cupid. This is because with this garland Sita appears to have virtually 'trapped' Lord Ram permanently in the 'snare' of her 'beauty' which was a reflection of the beauty of Kamdeo. She has also 'trapped' Lord Ram in the 'snare' of her intense 'love and affection' for the Lord, virtues for which Kamdeo is cited as a meptahor, for all times to come.] (109)

The wonderful and fabulous image on that auspicious day of Lord Sri Ram and Sita standing together was simply matchless². The queens (i.e. members of the royal household) were feeling very ecstatic every moment of that wonderful day when happiness and rejoicing pervaded everywhere³. (110)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 264 which makes an exactly similar comparison.

(ii) In Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 4, the comparison is made to a line of white Swans coming and sitting on the black catechu plant. In this version, the row of Swans is compared to the garland, and the dark-complexioned body of Lord with the dark-coloured catechu plant.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 265. (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 96, stanza no. 6.]

प्रभुहि माल पहिराइ जनकिहि लै चलीं ।
सखीं मनहुँ बिधु उदय मुदित कैरव कलीं ॥111॥
बरषहिं बिबुध प्रसून हरषि कहि जय जए ।
सुख सनेह भरे भुवन राम गुर पहुँ गए ॥112॥

prabhuhi māla pahirā'i janakihi lai calīm.
sakhīm manahum'bidhu udaya mudita kairava kalīm. 111.

baraṣahim bibudha prasūna haraṣi kahi jaya ja'e.
sukha sanēha bharē bhuvana rāma gura paham̐ ga'e. 112.

111-112. After garlanding the Lord, the companions took Janki (Sita) away cheerfully¹. They were as happy and excited as well as full of warmth and thrill as if the buds of the water-lily warmly open up when they see the moon rise.

[In this scene, the many companions of Sita are compared to the many water lilies in a pond, and Lord Ram's as well as Sita's cheerful faces to the full moon. When Sita's friends saw both Ram and Sita happy at their union, they too felt exceedingly happy.] (111)

The Gods were exhilarated, and they jubilantly showered flowers from the sky². At that time, all the Bhuvans (corners of the world) were filled with happiness, joy and cheer. After Sita left with her companions, Lord Ram too proceeded from the spot where the bow lay broken on the ground to where his Guru (sage Vishwamitra) was seated. (112)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 267.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 267.]

गए राम गुरु पहिं राउ रानी नारि—नर आनंद भरे ।
जनु तृषित करि करिनी निकर सीतल सुधासागर परे ॥
कौसिकहि पूजि प्रसंसि आयसु पाइ नृप सुख पायऊ ।
लिखि लगन तिलक समाज सजि कुल गुरहि अवध पढायऊ ॥14॥

chanda:

ga'e rāma guru pahim̐ rā'u rānī nāri-nara ānam̐da bharē.
janu tr̥ṣita kari karinī nikara sītala sudhāsāgara parē.
kausikahi pūji prasansi āyasu pā'i nr̥pa sukha pāya'ū.
likhi lagana tilaka samāja saji kula gurahi avadha paṭhāya'ū. 14.

Chanda 14. Sri Ram went near his Guru. The king and the queens as well as the men and women folk (citizens) were all exhilarated and excited, feeling overjoyed with warmth and happiness as if a horde of thirsty male and female elephants has plunged in a cool ocean consisting of Amrit, the nectar that not only quenches their thirst but also injects fresh life in the group of tired elephants.

[During hot summer days, the elephants get mad with thirst. When they find a water body, they plunge head-on into it. Imagine their pleasure when instead of a small pond or lake containing ordinary they find an ocean full of cool soothing nectar! They would jump and hop madly in ecstasy as they plod into this ocean, and would never wish to come out. These elephants would feel extremely happy and joyful as well as contented. The citizens of Janakpur felt like these elephants. A few moments ago there was uncertainty and anxiety symbolizing the intense thirst of the agitated elephants, and now when Lord Ram has broken the bow and it has become final that he would marry Sita, the

citizens erupted in joy like the thirsty elephants suddenly discovering a large ocean full of nectar. What more could they expect and want?]

The king (Janak, the father of Sita) worshipped and honoured Kaushik (Vishwamitra), got his blessings, and felt very happy and contented. Then he prepared an invitation-card showing the auspicious time when the stars would be favourable for the marriage ceremony to be formalized. [This is called a 'Lagan'.]

Then he assembled all the necessary items needed for the Tilak ceremony (which is equivalent to the official engagement of the bride with the groom), and sent it along with the formal invitation to Ayodhya (to Ram's father, king Dasrath) through his messenger, his royal priest named Shatanand.¹ (Chanda no. 14)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 286—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 287.]

Preparations for marriage of Lord Ram with Sita

[After Lord Ram broke the bow to seal his marriage with Sita, and she had put the victory garland around his neck, celebrations and preparations for the actual marriage ceremony began in right earnest in the city of Janakpur. The city was colourfully decorated, formal rituals were done, and Ram's father, king Dasrath of Ayodhya, was invited along with the marriage party which included his other two sons Bharat and Shatrughan.

These events are described below in verse nos. 113—126, and Chanda no. 15.]

गुनि गन बोलि कहेउ नृप माँडव छावन ।
गावहिं गीत सुआसिनि बाज बधावन ॥113॥
सीय राम हित पूजहिं गौरि गनेसहि ।
परिजन पुरजन सहित प्रमोद नरेसहि ॥114॥

guni gana bōli kahē'u nrpa māmḍava chāvana.
gāvahiṁ gīta su'āsini bāja badhāvana. 113.
sīya rāma hita pūjahim gauri ganēsahi.
parijana purajana sahita pramōda narēsahi. 114.

113-114. The king (Janak) summoned expert artisans and instructed them to prepare and decorate the 'Mandap' (which is a large decorated platform covered by a canopy under which the marriage is solemnised)¹. Young married girls began singing auspicious and felicitous songs suitable for the occasion, while ceremonial music was played cheerfully all around the city². (113)

They worshipped Gauri (Parvati) and Ganesh (the deity worshipped first during all religious ceremonies) for the all round welfare of Sita and Lord Sri Ram³.

In this manner, the king, along with his kith and kin as well as the people of the city, felt very happy, delighted and contented⁴. (114)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 287—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 289.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 263; (b) Doha no. 263; (c) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 264—to

Chaupai no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 265; (d) Doha no. 285; (e) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 286; (f) Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 297.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 257; (b) Doha no. 287 which says that sage Vishwamitra has asked king Janak to observe all rituals and formalities according to the tradition of his clan; (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 322; (d) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 312; and (e) Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323 that specifically mention that Gauri and Ganesh were worshipped.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 262 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8; (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 263; (c) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 286; (d) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 265.]

प्रथम हरदि बंदन करि मंगल गावहिं ।
करि कुल रीति कलस थपि तेलु चढ़ावहिं ।।115।।
गे मुनि अवध बिलोकि सुसरित नहायउ ।
सतानंद सत कोटि नाम फल पायउ ।।116।।

prathama haradi bandana kari maṅgala gāvahiṁ.
kari kula rīti kalasa thapi tēlu caṛhāvahiṁ. 115.
gē muni avadha bilōki susarita nahāya'u.
satānanda sata kōṭi nāma phala pāya'u. 116.

115-116. To begin with, they put 'Haldi' (turmeric) on the body of Sita, and sang auspicious and felicitous songs. They observed the traditions of the clan, put the ceremonial 'Kalash' (pots or vessels), and filled them with oil¹. (115)

Meanwhile, the sage (Shatanand) arrived at Ayodhya (as a messenger of king Janak, with an invitation for king Dasrath to attend the marriage ceremony of Ram with Sita)², and bathed in river Saryu. This bath gave him the reward of repeating 100 crore holy names of the Lord. {1 crore = 10 million. This is because river Saryu is said to be as holy as river Ganges, the river that traces its origin in the toe-nails of Lord Vishnu.} (116)

[Note—¹Refer: In Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 287 sage Vishwamitra has asked king Janak to observe all rituals and formalities according to the tradition of his clan.

This is reiterated again in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line no. 1 of stanza no. 2 that precede Doha no. 323, and (b) Chanda line no. 1 of Stanza no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 324 that say that the royal priests of both the sides, i.e. the side of the groom (Ram) as well as the bride (Sita), did all the rites according to their respective customs.

²King Janak sent his royal priest named Shatanand to Ayodhya with a message for Lord Ram's father, king Dasrath, informing him of the events that unfolded at Janakpur. He was invited to come to attend the marriage ceremony with full royal honours. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 287; and from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 293. However, it ought to be noted here that the name of the messenger is not mentioned in Ram Charit Manas.

But in Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 103, stanza no. 1 it is said that Janak had sent is 'royal priest' as a messenger with the invitation for Dasrath. This 'royal priest' was none else but Shatanand.]

नृप सुनि आगे आइ पूजि सनमानेउ ।
दीन्हि लगन कहि कुसल राउ हरषानेउ ।।117।।
सुनि पुर भयउ अनंद बधाव बजावहिं ।
सजहिं सुमंगल कलस बितान बनावहिं ।।118।।

nrpa suni āgē ā'i pūji sanamānē'u.
dīnhi lagana kahi kusala rā'u haraṣānē'u. 117.
suni pura bhaya'u ananda badhāva bajāvahiṁ.
sajahiṁ sumāṅgala kalasa bitāna banāvahiṁ. 118.

117-118. Hearing of the arrival of the sage, the king (Dasrath) came forward to warmly welcome, worship and honour him. Then the sage exchanged pleasantries and gave him the invitation-card called 'Lagan Patrika'. This made the king extremely happy and jubilant¹.

[The 'Lagan Patrika' is a letter detailing all the auspicious moments when the stars are favourable, and when all the various religious ceremonies and rituals associated with solemnization of marriage are to be performed.] (117)

Hearing this news (or, as soon as this good news spread), there was great rejoicing in the city and spontaneous felicitous music began to be played. Auspicious ceremonial pots and pitchers were put up everywhere in the city, and colourful awnings and canopies were spread everywhere, here and there throughout the city². (118)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 290—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 293.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 295—to Doha no. 297.]

राउ छाँड़ि सब काज साज सब साजहिं ।
चलेउ बरात बनाइ पूजि गनराजहिं ।।119।।
बाजहिं ढोल निसान सगुन सुभ पाइन्हि ।
सिय नैहर जनकौर नगर नियराइन्हि ।।120।।

rā'u chāmṛdi saba kāja sāja saba sājahim.
calē'u barāta banā'i pūji ganarājahim. 119.
bājahim ḍhōla nisāna saguna subha pā'inhi.
siya naihara janakaura nagara niyarā'inhi. 120.

119-120. The king (Dasrath) kept aside all other routine work and started preparations for assembling a grand marriage party¹. He worshipped Lord Ganesh and then embarked on the journey (to Janakpur)². (119)

Drums and trumpets are being sounded³, and auspicious signs and omens are occurring regularly⁴. In this way, amidst constant rejoicing and merry-making, the groom's party headed for Sita's place⁵. By and by, the city of Janakpur came near⁶. (120)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 294—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 300.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) from Doha no. 310—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 302; and (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (a) Doha no. 302 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 5-8; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 303—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 304.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.]

नियरानि नगर बरात हरषी लेन अगवानी गए।
देखत परस्पर मिलत मानत प्रेम परिपूरन भए॥
आनंदपुर कौतुक कोलाहल बनत सो बरनत कहाँ।
लै दियो तहँ जनवास सकल सुपास नित नूतन जहाँ॥15॥

chanda:

niyarāni nagara barāta haraṣī lēna agavānī ga'ē.
dēkhata paraspara milata mānata prēma paripūrana bha'ē.
ānandapura kautuka kōlāhala banata sō baranata kahām̃.
lai diyō taham̃ janavāsa sakala supāsa nita nūtana jahām̃. 15.

Chanda 15. The marriage party arrived near the city of Janakpur. Then all the people of the city went forward to enthusiastically and warmly welcome the honoured guests. Everyone from the bride's side amiably and cheerfully met everyone from the groom's side. This led to great bonhomie and development of a strong bond of mutual trust and friendship between the two sides. All were contented and felt fulfilled in every way.¹

There was great rejoicing, festivities, vibrant celebrations and a uproarious tumult in the city as it erupted in joyous abundance when the marriage party arrived. Tulsidas wonders how anyone can ever describe it in words. [That is, it is not possible to narrate in words the spirit of joy and happiness that prevailed during that time. One must imagine it.]

After the welcoming formalities were over, the guests (of marriage party) were taken to the designated place of lodging which was arranged for their comfortable stay. It had all the amenities one could think of, and the guests were treated to such regal comforts and pleasures that they desired nothing more. Nothing was left unattended, nothing was left to chance, and every need one could imagine of was well-provided for.² (15)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 304—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 306.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 306—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 307.]

गे जनवासहिं कौसिक राम लखन लिए ।
 हरषे निरखि बरात प्रेम प्रमुदित हिए ॥121॥
 हृदयँ लाइ लिए गोद मोद अति भूपहि ।
 कहि न सकहिं सत सेष अनंद अनूपहि ॥122॥

gē janavāsahim kausika rāma lakhana li'ē.
 haraṣē nirakhi barāta prēma pramudita hi'ē. 121.
 hr̥dayam̐ lā'i li'ē gōda mōda ati bhūpahi.
 kahi na sakahim̐ sata sēṣa ananda anūpahi. 122.

121-122. Kaushik (Vishwamitra) took Sri Ram and Laxman and went to the place where the marriage party was lodged, a place called Janwasa. He felt very happy on seeing the party; his heart was blooming with emotions of endearment, love and affection.

[Sage Vishwamitra and the two brothers Ram and Laxman were lodged at a different place. So when the news came that king Dasrath has arrived with the marriage party, the sage took the two brothers along with him to meet the king.] (121)

The king affectionately embraced Sri Ram and Laxman and seated them lovingly on his laps. He felt extremely pleased and exhilarated at that moment. Not even hundreds of Sheshnaths (the legendary hundred hooded serpents) can ever describe the immense sense of joy and exhilaration that flowed at that time in abundance at that time.

[In other words, thousands of expert narrators and writers will never be able to describe the intensity of love and affection as well as the atmosphere of joy, happiness and cheer that prevailed during those moments when king Dasrath met his two sons Ram and Laxman as well as sage Vishwamitra.

The loving father who was not willing to part with his two beloved sons at any cost, but had to relent and send them to the far away forest to fight demons under pressure of the two great sages, sage Vashistha and sage Vishwamitra, would naturally be overjoyed and brim-over with love and ecstasy on seeing them once again. And it was not an ordinary reunion. As every father would dream of, king Dasrath was extremely delighted and pleased to learn that his son Ram has established his majesty and glory on his own in the middle of an assembly where all the mighty and powerful kings and princes of the world at that time were present.

To add icing to the cake, his son had succeeded in marrying a beautiful princess by defeating all other contenders in full public view, and this was no ordinary or lean achievement as the victory was centered on breaking of an object, the bow, that was regarded as being as much invincible and strong as the 'Vajra', the mighty weapon of Indra, the king of Gods. Therefore, this victory established Lord Ram's fame throughout the world instantaneously. Say, what more can or would a father ever want?

Hence, the happiness of Dasrath knew no bounds, and it had many dimensions—he was happy to meet his beloved sons once again; he was happy to see Ram established as a matchless warrior having an equally matchless strength and might; he was happy that he has got married; and he was happy that the father-in-law of Ram is also a renowned king in his own right.] (122).

[Note—See verse nos. 123-124 below.

This episode is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 307—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 309.]

रायँ कौसिकहि पूजि दान बिप्रन्ह दिए।
 राम सुमंगल हेतु सकल मंगल किए॥123॥
 ब्याह बिभूषन भूषित भूषन भूषन।
 बिस्व बिलोचन बनज बिकासक पूषन॥124॥

rāyam̐ kausikahi pūji dāna bipranha di'ē.
 rāma sumāṅgala hētu sakala maṅgala ki'ē. 123.
 byāha bibhūṣana bhūṣita bhūṣana bhūṣana.
 bisva bilōcana banaja bikāsaka pūṣana. 124.

123-124. The king (Dasrath) worshipped sage Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and gave alms to Brahmins generously. Besides that, he did all the good deeds that were deemed necessary for the welfare and good of Sri Ram who is akin to a sun for helping the lotus-like eyes of the world to develop and bloom.

[The metaphor of the lotus and the sun is used to mean that Lord Ram gives immense happiness and joy to the world. The Lord's sight and presence is a giver of all sorts of cheerfulness and happiness to the creatures of this world. Lord Ram is compared to the 'sun', and the rest of the world to the 'lotus flower'. When the world 'sees' the Lord with it's 'eyes', it becomes jubilant and exhilarated just like the lotus flower that opens its petals as soon as it sees the rising sun.]

He (Ram)—who is like the intrinsic quality of beauty, charm and magnificence that is inherent to all beautiful ornaments—is himself adorned with ornaments befitting the happy occasion of marriage.

[In other words, though the Lord is intrinsically beautiful and charming because he is a personified form of the Supreme Being from whom the beautiful Mother Nature has emerged, and therefore he does not need any external ornamentation to make him more beautiful and charming, but still the Supreme Being accepts worldly obligations and requirements that come with his having assumed a human form as Lord Ram. Therefore, he gladly accepted his gross body being decorated by gross ornaments though his original divine body does not need any such decorations. The Lord indeed personifies the virtues of beauty, charm and magnificence, and since he pervades the world from the inside as well as the outside, it did not matter to him if some signs of artificial decorations are put on his gross body¹.] (123-124)

[Note—These verses follow the previous verse nos. 121-122.

¹The way the Lord was decorated and attired in beautiful clothes that made his physical appearance exceptionally fabulous is narrated in detail in—(i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 316; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 327; and (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 108.]

मध्य बरात बिराजत अति अनुकूलेउ।
 मनहुँ काम आराम कलपतरु फूलेउ॥125॥
 पठई भेंट बिदेह बहुत बहु भौतिन्ह।

देखत देव सिहाहिं अनंद बरातिन्ह ॥126॥

madhya barāta birājata ati anukūlē'u.
manahum' kāma ārāma kalapataru phūlē'u. 125.
paṭha'ī bhēṇṭa bidēha bahuta bahu bhāmṭinha.
dēkhata dēva sihāhiṁ ananda barātinha. 126.

125-126. He (Lord Ram) looks very adorable and elegant as he stood with a cheerful mind in the middle of the exuberant marriage party. This sight reminds one of the magnificent garden of Kamdeo-cupid where a beautiful all wish-fulling Kalpa Tree stands majestically in the center.

[Here, Lord Ram is likened to the 'Kalpa Tree', and the marriage party of cheerful members as the 'garden of Kamdeo-cupid'. Kamdeo is the patron god of beauty and charm as well as everything else associated with these virtues. This implies that every member of the marriage party is finely attired and look adorable, but like the Kalpa Tree standing majestically in the middle of the garden and becoming the center of attraction for everyone as no other tree can match it in its beauty and its ability to please everyone, Lord Ram too stands out uniquely and looks exceptional in this august gathering.] (125)

Videh (king Janak) sent countless varieties of gifts for the guests. The Gods praised such gesture and the members of the marriage party felt very happy, delighted and contented.

[The Gods praised king Janak for being noble-hearted and liberal in giving gifts to the invited guests. The guests on the other hand felt happy and contented as it indicated that they are being properly honoured and shown due respect by the bride's father. The immensity of the gifts also showed them that he is rich and prosperous. Of course everyone of the groom's side would feel happy on finding out that the bride's side is prosperous and well-off financially.] (126)

Sri Ram's marriage with Sita

[The marriage of Lord Ram with Sita was solemnized with great rejoicing and fanfare in the presence of the citizens of the two kingdoms, i.e. Janakpur and Ayodhya, as well as the Gods who witnessed the ceremony from the sky. The events of the time were etched in the memory of time for eternity.

Lord Ram's marriage is described below from verse nos. 127—to 152, and Chanda no. 15—to 19. All the other brothers of Lord Ram, viz. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, were also married at the same time. Their marriage is narrated from verse nos. 153—to 156.

The feast after the marriage is described in verse nos. 159-160 and Chanda no. 20.]

बेद बिदित कुलरीति कीन्हि दुहुँ कुलगुर ।
पठई बोलि बरात जनक प्रमुदित मन ॥127॥
जाइ कहेउ पगु धारिअ मुनि अवधेसहि ।
चले सुमिरि गुरु गौरि गिरिस गनेसहि ॥128॥

bēda bidita kularīti kīnhi duhum³ kulagura.
 paṭha'ī bōli barāta janaka pramudita mana. 127.
 jā'i kahē'u pagu dhāri'a muni avadhēsahi.
 calē sumiri guru gauri girīsa ganēsahi. 128.

127-128. The two Gurus of the respective clans completed all the prescribed formal rites as ordained by the Vedas¹. Thereafter, Janak cheerfully sent an invitation to the groom's party to come to the venue. (127)

Then the sage (Shatanand) went to the residence of the groom's party (the Janwasa) and respectfully invited them, saying, 'Please come along'. At this, the members of the marriage party headed by king Dasrath invoked and remembered the Guru (Vashistha), Gauri (Parvati), Girish (Shiva) and Ganesh, and then set off for the marriage venue.² (128)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319.

²Refer: When the auspicious moment arrived, king Janak invited king Dasrath and others to come with Lord Ram to the venue of the marriage ceremony. Janak warmly welcomed each one of them and gave them their respective seats. He showed special honour to Dasrath and his close associates. These events are narrated in great detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 312—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 321.

As far as king Dasrath invoking the blessings of the Guru and Gods before departure for the venue, it is specifically mentioned so also in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 313.]

चले सुमिरि गुर सुर सुमन बरषहिं परे बहुबिधि पावड़े ।
 सनमानि सब बिधि जनक दसरथ किये प्रेम कनावड़े ।।
 गुन सकल सम समधी परस्पर मिलन अति आनंद लहे ।
 जय धन्य जय जय धन्य धन्य बिलोकि सुर नर मुनि कहे ।।16।।

chanda:

calē sumiri gura sura sumana baraṣahiṁ parē bahubidhi pāvaṛē.
 sanamāni saba bidhi janaka dasaratha kiyē prēma kanāvaṛē.
 guna sakala sama samadhī paraspara milana ati ānamḍa lahē.
 jaya dhan'ya jaya jaya dhan'ya dhan'ya bilōki sura nara muni kahē. 16.

Chanda 16. He (Dasrath) remembered his Guru and started for the venue of the marriage ceremony. The Gods showered flowers and a variety of red carpets were spread out to welcome him. Janak did all that was possible to show honour to Dasrath so much so that the latter was overwhelmed with the affection shown towards him by the former. The two felt most exhilarated and joyous when they met each other. Both of them were comparable to each other in terms of virtues, glories, fames, as well as good and noble characters.

Watching the two (i.e. Janak and Dasrath), the Gods as well as humans, including great sages and seers, felt extremely cheerful and happy. They lauded this pair and exclaimed in unison—‘It is a remarkable pair. Glory to them! Indeed they are worthy of praise and laurels.’ (Chanda no. 16)

[Note—The meeting of the two kings Janak and Dasrath has been described in detail in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 321.

Refer also to verse no. 129 below.]

तीनि लोक अवलोकहिं नहिं उपमा कोउ ।
दसरथ जनक समाज जनक दसरथ दोउ ॥129॥
सजहिं सुमंगल साज रहस रनिवासहि ।
गान करहिं पिकबैनि सहित परिहासहि ॥130॥

tīni lōka avalōkahim nahim upamā kō'u.
dasaratha janaka samāja janaka dasaratha dō'u. 129.
sajahim sumaṅgala sāja rahasa ranivāsahi.
gāna karahim pikabaini sahita parihāsahi. 130.

129-130. They (i.e. the Gods, the ordinary humans and the exalted sages and seers) search in all the three worlds (the celestial, the terrestrial and the subterranean; everywhere) but cannot find anything appropriate to compare with kings Dasrath and Janak. Indeed, Dasrath and Janak are unique in themselves¹. (129)

In the bride's household, there is great rejoicing and exultation. Everyone is busy decorating and assembling things which are necessary accessories for such happy occasions (of marriage), while sweet-voiced beautiful women are singing felicitous songs, making marry and cracking jokes.² (130)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 320 that unanimously endorse this observation.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chanda line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 317—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 319; (b) Chaupai line no. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 322; (c) Chanda that precedes Doha no. 322.]

उमा रमादिक सुरतिय सुनि प्रमुदित भई ।
कपट नारि बर बेष बिरचि मंडप गई ॥131॥
मंगल आरति साज बरहि परिछन चलीं ।
जनु बिगसीं रबि उदय कनक पंकज कलीं ॥132॥

umā ramādika suratiya suni pramudita bha'im.
kapaṭa nāri bara bēṣa biraci maṇḍapa ga'im. 131.
maṅgala āraṭi sāja barahi parichana calim.
janu bigasim rabi udaya kanaka paṅkaja kalim. 132.

131-132. Hearing those magnificent songs, Uma (Parvati), Rama (Laxmi) and other divine consorts of various Gods became exhilarated. All of them assumed the illusive

forms of womenfolk of the city and went to the venue of the marriage ceremony to participate in it.¹ (131)

They arranged the paraphernalia for doing the auspicious Arti of the groom (Sri Ram) and proceeded to meet him². They are so happy and jubilant that they resemble the buds of the golden lotus that open up their petals at the sight of the rising sun³. (132)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 321 says that the Gods assumed different human forms and went to participate in the marriage ceremony; (b) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 322 say that the divine consorts of the Gods, such as Parvati, Laxmi and others also assumed the form of womenfolk and went to attend the marriage of Sita and Ram. Sita's mother welcomed them all warmly though she could not know who they actually were.

²Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 317. The 'Aarti' is a process whereby lighted oil lamps are arranged on a platter and moved in a clockwise manner in front of the honoured guest. This is a traditional gesture done as a ritual to welcome the guest as well as to wish him all good luck. In this case of course the honoured guest is Lord Ram, the groom.

³A similar comparison is made by Tulsidas in his book Kavitaawali, Ayodhya Kand, verse no. 22, line no. 3.

Refer also to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 318.]

नख सिख सुंदर राम रूप जब देखहिं ।
सब इंद्रिन्ह महुँ इंद्र बिलोचन लेखहिं ॥133॥
परम प्रीति कुलरीति करहिं गज गामिनि ।
नहिं अघाहिं अनुराग भाग भरि भामिनि ॥134॥

nakha sikha sundara rāma rūpa jaba dēkhahim.
saba indrinha maham'indra bilōcana lēkhahim. 133.
parama prīti kularīti karahim gaja gāmini.
nahim aghāhim anurāga bhāga bhari bhāmini. 134.

133-134. When they (the womenfolk of Janakpur) observe the elegant, fascinating, magnificent and stupendous beauty and charm of the form of Lord Sri Ram, from his toe-nails to the tuft of hairs on his head, they behold it spellbound, enthralled and mesmerised by the beauty of the sight. At that time they hoped that their bodies should have had thousands of eyes, just like Indra has, so that they could have watched the unparalleled enchanting sight of Lord Ram's beautiful form with all those extra eyes and enjoy it thousands of times more than what they can do now with merely two eyes at present.

[The human body has only two eyes. So these women praised Indra, the king of Gods, who is believed to have thousands of eyes in the form of 'holes' in his body. They hoped that if they too had as many eyes on their bodies as does Indra, then they too would have been able to see the wonderful form of the Lord with all these thousand eyes simultaneously, and enjoy thousands of time more than they are able to do at present with merely two natural eyes.] (133)

Those women walked gracefully with an elephant-like majestic gait. They were overwhelmed with the warmth of love and affection heaving inside their hearts. They felt extremely fortunate and blessed.

They perform all the rituals warmly and affectionately according to the established traditions of the clan, but do not feel satisfied or done with it. [That is, they perform the rituals again and again repeatedly, so that they are able to spend some more time with Sri Ram.] (134)

[Note—A similar view is expressed in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede Doha no. 317. These lines describe how the different Gods felt happy to have many unconventional eyes because now they could see the beautiful form of Lord Ram as a groom with so many additional eyes:—

“Lord Shiva became so enthralled by the beautiful sight of Lord Ram that he felt extremely glad that he has fifteen eyes. (Shiva has five heads, and each head has three eyes—two conventional eyes and one eye of wisdom located in the center of his forehead. Hence, 5 heads x 3 eyes = 15 eyes in all.)

When Lord Vishnu saw Ram he too was enthralled along with Laxmi, his divine consort who herself is an image of beauty and charm.

The creator Brahma too was enthralled when he saw the enchanting image of Lord Ram, and he regretted that he has only eight eyes. (Brahma has 4 heads by which he pronounced the 4 Vedas, and each head has 2 eyes. Hence, 4 heads x 2 eyes each = 8 eyes in all. He compares himself with Lord Shiva who has 15 eyes, and thus could enjoy the wonderful sight of Lord Ram more than Brahma who has merely 8 eyes.)

Lord Kartikeya, the commander of the army of Gods, thought himself to be luckier than Brahma as he could see the wonderful form of Lord Ram one-and-a-half times more clearly than the latter. (Kartikeya has 12 eyes, which are 1½ times more than that possessed by Brahma who has only 8 eyes.)

Meanwhile, Indra, the king of Gods, watches Lord Ram with his thousand eyes (in the form of holes on his body). He now feels that the curse of sage Gautam has become his blessing because of the fact that he can enjoy the fabulous form of Lord Ram thousand of times more intensely and with more clarity than the other Gods.

When the other Gods look at Indra they feel envious of him, and praise him at the same time, for he is able to see Lord Ram with thousand eyes, whereas they can't. The Gods say that no one is more fortunate than Indra today.

So, all the different Gods felt exhilarated and fortunate as they happily watched Lord Ram. Similarly, the two sides, i.e. king Dasrath's and king Janak's sides, too felt extremely happy and joyful (like the Gods) as they watched, fascinated, the magnificently charming image of the Lord.”

The story of how Indra got these thousand eyes is linked to the story of sage Gautam's wife Ahilya turning into stone. Briefly it is narrated as a note to verse no. 40 of this book Janki Mangal.]

नेगचारु कहँ नागरि गहरु न लावहिं।
निरखि निरखि आनंदु सुलोचनि पावहिं॥135॥
करि आरती निछावरि बरहि निहारहिं।
प्रेम मगन प्रमदागन तन न सँभारहिं॥136॥

nēgacāru kaham̐ nāgari gaharu na lāvahim̐.
nirakhi nirakhi ānandu sulōcani pāvahim̐. 135.
kari āratī nichāvāri barahi nihārahim̐.
prēma magana pramadāgana tana na sam̐bhārahim̐. 136.

135-136. Those clever maidens of the city do not delay in doing the various rites and completing all the necessary formalities. Those women with beautiful eyes get immense joy and delight by repeatedly watching Lord Sri Ram. (135)

After performing the ceremonial Arti (showing of small lighted lamps) and making offerings (generally involving sprinkling of coloured rice grains around the object of Arti; here, around Sri Ram), they became so overwhelmed with lovable emotions that they lost control over their bodies (i.e. they became unaware of their surroundings as they were spellbound by the captivating and charming image of Sri Ram as a groom). (136)

[Note—Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 317—to Doha no. 318; and Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 319.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 321 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 2-4.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 108.

Refer also to Chanda no. 17 below that builds up on these two verses.]

नहिं तन सम्हारहिं छबि निहारहिं निमिष रिपु जनु रनु जए ।
चक्रवै लोचन राम रूप सुराज सुख भोगी भए ।।
तब जनक सहित समाज राजहि उचित रुचिरासन दए ।
कौसिक बसिष्ठहि पूजि पूजे राउ दै अंबर नए ।। 17 ।।

chanda:

nahim tana samhārahim chabi nihārahim nimiṣa ripu janu ranu ja'ē.
cakravai lōcana rāma rūpa surāja sukha bhōgī bha'ē.
taba janaka sahita samāja rājahi ucita rucirāsana da'ē.
kausika basiṣṭhahi pūji pūjē rā'u dai ambara na'ē. 17.

Chanda 17. They are unable to exercise control over their bodies (as they have become very excited and ecstatic). They intently observe the beautiful image of Sri Ram. It looks as if they have won over the enemy represented by their eyelids in the battle-field. [That is, they stare unblinkingly at Sri Ram, being most enchanted and mesmerised by his stupendous beauty. They have 'conquered their eyelids' in the sense that they stopped them from closing and opening repeatedly as they gaze fixedly at the enchanting image of the Lord.]¹

It appears that an emperor symbolized by their eyes has conquered an enemy represented by the constant blinking of the eyelids so that these womenfolk could now enjoy unhindered the happiness and prosperity of a beautiful kingdom symbolized by the enchanting image of Lord Ram as a groom.

Then king Janak gave suitable and honourable seats to Dasrath and his companions. [That is, he seated Dasrath and his party according to their position in the royal and social hierarchy.]

Thereafter, he worshipped sages Kaushik and Vashistha. Then he worshipped the king (Dasrath), and offered them all new garments and ceremonial robes.² (Chanda no. 17)

[Note—¹Refer verse nos. 135-136 above.

Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 321 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 2-4.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 320—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 321.]

देत अरघ रघुबीरहि मंडप लै चलीं ।
करहिं सुमंगल गान उमगि आनंद अलीं ॥137॥
बर बिराज मंडप महँ बिस्व बिमोहइ ।
ऋतु बसंत बन मध्य मदनु जनु सोहइ ॥138॥

dēta aragha raghubīrahi maṇḍapa lai calīm.
karaḥīm sumaṅgala gāna umagi ānamḍa alīm. 137.
bara birāja maṇḍapa maham̐ bisva bimōha'i.
ṛtu basanta bana madhya madanu janu sōha'i. 138.

137-138. Some of these maidens (who were friends of Sita) offered libations to Raghubir (Sri Ram) while they brought him gladly to the platform where the marriage was to be formalised¹. They are very excited and overwhelmed with surging emotions of warmth and exhilaration. They sing beautiful, melodious, auspicious and felicitous songs². (137)

The groom, Lord Sri Ram, is present in the pavilion, and his dignified and elegant presence seems to enchant and attract the attention of the whole world. He looks fabulous and as vibrantly magnificent and adorable as Kamdeo-cupid does in the center of a garden or forest during the spring season.

[In this imagery, the decorated platform where the marriage was to be solemnized is compared to a beautiful garden, and Lord Ram who is seated in the center of it is compared to Kamdeo-cupid, the God of charm, magnificence and beauty.] (138)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 319.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 319; (b) Doha no. 321 along with its preceding Chanda line no. 2.]

कुल बिबहार बेद बिधि चाहिय जहँ जस ।
उपरोहित दोउ करहिं मुदित मन तहँ तस ॥139॥
बरहि पूजि नृप दीन्ह सुभग सिंहासन ।
चलीं दुलहिनिहि ल्याइ पाइ अनुसासन ॥140॥

kula bibahāra bēda bidhi cāhiya jaham̐ jasa.
uparōhita dō'u karaḥīm mudita mana taham̐ tasa. 139.
barahi pūji nṛpa dīnha subhaga sinhāsana.
calīm dulaḥinihi lyā'i pā'i anusāsana. 140.

139-140. Whatever was required to be done and whichever rite was needed to be performed according to traditions of the clan and the edicts of the Vedas, both the officiating royal priests (Vashistha and Shatanand) did them very cheerfully¹. (139)

The king (Janak) worshipped the groom and gave him a beautiful throne to sit upon², while the maidens went to fetch the bride on getting the instructions to do so³. (140)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 319; (b) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 322; (c) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 323; and (d) Chanda line no. 1 of stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 and Chanda line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 319.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8, and Chanda line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 322.]

जुबति जुत्थ मँ सीय सुभाइ बिराजइ ।
उपमा कहत लजाइ भारती भाजइ ।।141।।
दुलह दुलहिनिन्ह देखि नारि नर हरषहिं ।
छिनु छिनु गान निसान सुमन सुर बरषहिं ।।142।।

jubati jut'tha maham̐ sīya subhā'i birāja'i.
upamā kahata lajā'i bhārati bhāja'i. 141.
dulaha dulaheininha dēkhi nāri nara haraṣahim̐.
chinu chinu gāna nisāna sumana sura baraṣahim̐. 142.

141-142. [After the groom, Lord Sri Ram, was duly honoured and seated, the bride, Sita, was summoned¹. She came to the place of the marriage rites surrounded by her female companions and friends. These two verses describe the sight of Sita as she came to the spot where the rites were to be performed, and the celebrations that accompanied her arrival.]

Sita looks naturally adorable and beautiful in the midst of a crowd of womenfolk who surround her from all sides².

Goddess Saraswati finds herself incompetent to describe the majesty and grandeur of that moment as she cannot find adequate words (though she is supposed to be the patron goddess of language and speech). So she feels ashamed and mortified at her ineptness and makes good her escape silently to avoid embarrassment. [In other words, Sita looked so magnificent and fabulous at that time that even the goddess of speech failed to find words to describe her beauty and charm. So she hastily escaped from the site to avoid laughter and ridicule. This was because all other goddesses were also present there³, and it would be a matter of shame not to sing the glory of that occasion when all other womenfolk were trying their best to sing melodious songs befitting that divine moment.] (141)

Men and women folk became jubilant and thrilled as they watched the groom and the bride sitting together. They sang felicitous songs every now and then⁴. The Gods too sang merrily, beating their musical drums and showering flowers from the sky every now and then⁵. (142)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4, 8 that precede Doha no. 322.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 322—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 323.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 322.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 313; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 325.

⁵Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 314; (b) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 323; (c) Chaupai line no. 7 and Chanda stanza no. 1 that precede Doha no. 324; (d) Doha no. 324 itself.

Refer also to: (ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse nos. 105-106, and (iii) Kavitali, Baal Kand, verse no. 17-17.]

लै लै नाउँ सुआसिनि मंगल गावहिं ।
कुँवर कुँवरि हित गनपति गौर पुजावहिं ।।143 ।।
अग्नि थापि मिथिलेस कुसोदक लीन्हेउ ।
कन्या दान बिधान संकलप कीन्हेउ ।।144 ।।

lai lai nā'um̐ su'āsini maṅgala gāvahiṁ.
kum̐vara kum̐vari hita ganapati gaura puṭāvahim̐. 143.
agini thāpi mithilēsa kusōdaka līnhē'u.
kan'yā dāna bidhāna saṅkalapa kīnhē'u. 144.

143-144. Married ladies of the city sing auspicious songs using the name of the groom and the bride (i.e. Lord Sri Ram and Sita respectively)¹. They cheerfully make the prince (Sri Ram) and the princess (Sita) worship Lord Ganesh and Gauri (Parvati) for the couple's welfare and happiness². (143)

The king of Mithila (Janak) established (i.e. kindled) the sacred fire and took water and Kush grass in his hands to prepare for the ritual called 'Kanya Daan' (wherein the bride's father gives away his daughter in marriage to the groom in the witness of the Fire God)³. (144)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 298.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 323.

Earlier also, in verse no. 114 of this book Janki Mangal, there is mention of worship of Gauri and Ganesh. Gauri is the consort of Lord Shiva and the Mother Goddess, and Ganesh is the son of Lord Shiva. Ganesh is worshipped at the beginning of all religious ceremonies or at the beginning of any enterprise to invoke his blessings for their success.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 323 which says that the Fire God manifested himself to accept the offerings made by Janak; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-8, as well as Chanda stanza nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 324 describe in detail the process by which Janak gave Sita to Ram in marriage.

The ritual is called 'Kanya Daan'. It is the final moment during a marriage ceremony when the bride's father formally hands over his daughter to the groom with the Fire God as witness, and the groom formally accepts her as part of his own family with the promise that he will take care of her.

The word 'Kanya' means an unmarried girl, and the word 'Daan' literally means giving away selflessly and in a manner such that the giver forgoes all his claims over the thing given. In other words, the father gives his daughter to the groom in a selfless manner, and from that instant relinquishes his rights over her. The girl's father cannot

claim her to be a member of his family from the moment she is given in marriage to the groom—i.e. he forgoes his right to call her a member of his clan or family. This is the reason the girl has to assume the surname of her groom's family to indicate that from the moment of the 'Kanya Daan' ritual she has assumed a totally new identity and family. She no longer belongs to her father's family because she has been virtually given as a 'gift' ('Daan') to her husband by her father and mother.

Since 'Daan' is a one-way transfer of anything that is given away as an honourable gift, with nothing expected in return, the bride's father does not expect anything from the groom or his family for giving them his daughter.

This is also an obvious reason why making the wife suffer and forcing her to go back to her father's house is an unpardonable sin because at the time of accepting her as a 'Daan' or 'gift', the groom had made the Fire God a witness that he willingly accepts the responsibility of taking care of the bride and treat her respectfully as part of his family. Not to do so subsequently is therefore an unforgivable sin.

The entire process has been described in sage Valmiki's 'Ramayana', 1/73/25-29. Let us see briefly what it says—

"Then (after formal rituals started and Lord Ram was duly honoured and seated), Sita was fully decorated and brought to the venue. She was made to sit with Lord Ram, in the front of the sacred fire. Janak then solemnly said to Ram, 'Sita is my daughter. She is being given to you so that you two can perform various religious deeds and fulfill the different obligations ordained by the laws of Dharma. Please accept her. You be blessed. Take her hands in your hands (i.e. accept her). She will be loyal to you ('Pativrataa'), she will bring good fortunes and luck for you ('Saubhagyawati'), and she will live like a shadow for you ('Chaaya'; i.e. she will always follow you, stay with you, and protect you).'

Saying this, king Janak pronounced sacred Mantras and dropped (sprinkled) the consecrated water (that he had been holding, along with the Kush grass, in his cupped palms). At that time, the gods and sages blessed them, exclaiming 'Glory to you'. The gods played their kettle-drums and showered flowers from the sky. In this way, Janak gifted his daughter (Sita) to Ram."]

संकल्पि सिय रामहि समरपी सील सुख सोभामई ।
जिमि संकरहि गिरिराज गिरिजा हरिहि श्री सागर दई ॥
सिंदूर बंदन होम लावा होन लागी भौवरी ।
सिल पोहनी करि मोहनी मनहर्षो मूरति साँवरी ॥१८॥

chanda:

saṅkalpi siya rāmaḥi samarapī sīla sukha sōbhāma'ī.
jimi saṅkarahi girirāja girijā harihi śrī sāgara da'ī.
sindūra bandana hōma lāvā hōna lāgī bhāmvarīm.
sila pōhanī kari mōhanī manaharyō mūrati sāmvarīm. 18.

Chanda 18. The king made a solemn vow and formally handed over Sita—who had good virtues and characters, was the provider of all happiness, joy and comforts, and was most adorable and magnificent—to Sri Ram just as the king of the mountains called Giriraj had handed over Girija (Parvati) to Lord Shiva, and the Ocean had given away Laxmi (the goddess of wealth) to Hari (Vishnu) at the time of their respective marriages¹.

[Then the different marriage rituals were performed in succession as follows—] The vermilion was consecrated and put on the forehead of the bride by the groom². Rice flakes were scattered before the couple as well as the sacred fire before these flakes were offered to the sacrificial fire itself as an offering³. Then the ritual of ‘Bhanwari’ (circumambulation around the sacred fire by the married couple) was completed⁴.

After that, the ‘Shil Pohani’ ritual was done (in which solid turmeric is crushed on a grinding stone or mortar with the help of a pestle)⁵. At that time, Sri Ram’s enchanting and magnificent dark-complexioned image stole the mind and heart of all those present⁶. (Chanda no. 18)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 324.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 325.

³Refer: Parvati Mangal, verse no. 80 that narrate a similar ritual during the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda stanza no. 4, line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 324; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1 and 7 that precede Doha no. 325.

⁵Refer: Parvati Mangal, verse no. 80. The book ‘Parvati Mangal’ describes the marriage of Lord Shiva with Parvati.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2, 4-6 that precede Doha no. 325.]

एहि बिधि भयो बिबाह उछाह तिहूँ पुर।
देहिं असीम मुनीस सुमन बरषहिं सुर।।145।।
मन भावत बिधि कीन्ह मुदित भामिनि भई।
बर दुलहिनिहि लवाइ सखीं कोहबर गई।।146।।

ēhi bidhi bhayō bibāha uchāha tihūṁ^ṁ pura.
dēhiṁ aśīma munīsa sumana baraṣahiṁ sura. 145.
mana bhāvata bidhi kīnha mudita bhāmini bha’īṁ.
bara dulahinihi lavā’i sakhīṁ kōhabara ga’īṁ. 146.

145-146. In this way, the marriage rituals were completed with full dignity. Happiness, cheer, joy, exhilaration and ecstasy spread in all the directions of the world in great abundance¹. The sages and seers gave their blessings to the couple, while the Gods showered flowers from the sky². (145)

Seeing that the creator has fully satisfied the desire of their hearts (as they had all wanted Lord Ram to marry Sita), the women folk felt exceedingly happy and contented³.

After that, the companions of Sita took the bride and the groom to the ‘Kohabar’ (i.e. the room in the house of the bride where the clan’s deities are placed and worshipped)⁴. (146)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1, line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 325.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 324; (b) Doha no. 324 itself; (c) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326; (d) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 94.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 324.

⁴*Kohabar* is a ritual when both the groom and the bride are taken to the worship room in the bride's house to worship the family deities of the bride. At that time, the newly wed couples are surrounded by close family members of the bride.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 327.]

निरखि निछावर करहि बसन मनि छिनु छिनु।
जाइ न बरनि बिनोद मोदमय सो दिनु।।147।।
सिय भ्राताके समय भोम तहँ आयउ।
दुरीदुरा करि नेगु सुनात जनायउ।।148।।

nirakhi nichāvara karahi basana mani chinu chinu.
jā'i na barani binōda mōdamaya sō dinu. 147.
siya bhrātākē samaya bhōma taham āya'u.
durīdurā kari nēgu sunāta janāya'u. 148.

147-148. They (the companions of Sita as well as other ladies of the royal household and the city) look intently and repeatedly at him (Lord Sri Ram), so fascinated were they at the charming image of the Lord. They were so overwhelmed with joy and happiness that they liberally gave away as gift whatever they could lay their hands upon, such as different types of robes and clothes as well as gems and jewels¹. One cannot describe that day in which wave after huge wave of warmth, joy, happiness and celebrations surged ahead and heaved in great abundance². (147)

When the necessity was felt for the presence of Sita's brother during the course of the rituals, Mars (considered to be the son of earth) appeared personally in an illusive form and completed all the ritualistic formalities, thereby proclaiming (making it known) his blessings for the couple and his promise that he will always be favourable to them³. (148)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 327.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line no. 4, and stanza no. 4 that precede Doha no. 327.

³Usually *Mars* is deemed to be a malignant planet that is the cause of much grief to the living being. His coming personally disguised as Sita's brother to bless Ram and Sita shows that he vows to protect them at all times in the future.

It is believed in mythology that Mars is the son of Mother Earth. Sita was produced from earth. So Mars was right in assuming the form of Sita's brother as both had Mother Earth as their parent.

Mars appeared in a human form but cast his magical spell of illusion upon the assembly so that no one could recognise him and know his true identity. The magical charm that mesmerised the people at that moment was so intense that no one could understand the import of this development. Everyone forgot for the moment that Sita had no brother, and therefore the person disguised as the brother must be some manifested form a God or some other divine Being.

In Padma Puran, Paatal Khand, Ram Ashwamedh, 11/27—30/58-64 it is clearly written that 'Laxmi-nidhi' was Sita's brother, and he was present to complete all the

rituals required to be done by the bride's brother. But this was no ordinary marriage. It was a reiteration of the cosmic union of the Supreme Being and his Shakti, albeit in its manifested form. Mars decided that if all the gods and goddesses could participate in disguised forms in this divine marriage of the Lord and his Shakti, then why should he remain behind, and why should he not too sneak in secretly in a disguise. Mars thought the matter over and decided to become Sita's brother. No one would point a finger at him and accuse him of taking a wrong role—because he was born from Earth just like Sita, and therefore she is deemed to be his sister! So everything would be okay.

In other words, Mars sneaked in quietly and remained invisible to the ordinary people who thought that Laxmi-nidhi was performing all the rituals needed to be done by the bride's brother. He stood alongside Laxmi-nidhi and participated in the rituals. No one except Lord Ram and the wise sages and the gods could know this trick. Remember—all the gods and goddesses had played the same trick to enjoy being a part of the divine celebrations. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 321 which tell us that the different senior gods had assumed human forms to participate in the marriage; (b) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 322 says the same thing about goddesses; and (d) Doha no. 323 that says that the Fire God manifested himself to accept the offerings, and the Vedas too manifested themselves to tell about the various steps in the rituals and guide the officiating priests.]

चतुर नारि बर कुँवरिहि रीति सिखावहिं ।
देहिं गारि लहकौरि समौ सुख पावहिं ।।149 ।।
जुआ खेलावन कौतुक कीन्ह सयानिन्ह ।
जीति हारि मिस देहिं गारि दुहु रानिन्ह ।।150 ।।

catura nāri bara kum̐varihi rīti sikhāvahim̐.
dēhim̐ gāri lahakauri samau sukha pāvahim̐. 149.
ju'ā khēlāvana kautuka kīnha sayāninha.
jīti hāri misa dēhim̐ gāri duhu rāninha. 150.

149-150. Clever women teach the clan's traditions to both the groom and the bride. During the 'Lahakori' ritual, these women crack jokes with each other and tease the newly-wed couple with taunting remarks and songs that have sarcastic lyrics, deriving immense pleasure from the laughter that accompanies such remarks and the discomfiture that it cause to the couple¹. (149)

During the 'dice playing' ritual, the clever women use the ploy of losing and winning the game to pass unsavoury and taunting remarks at the two queens (i.e. at the mothers of Sri Ram and Sita—Kaushalya and Sunaina respectively)². (150)

[Note—¹The *Lahakori* ritual is one in which both the bride and the groom are made to feed each other sweetened curd and other sweets using their fingers as spoons, while the ladies surrounding them pass lewd remarks at the couple and poke fun at them, making them blush. It is a rite aimed at overcoming their inhibitions and making them informal with each other.

Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 2, line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 327.

²The *game of dice* is another such ritual that helps to create a jovial atmosphere of laughter, bonhomie and informality. It is done to break the so-called barrier of formalities and the wall of protocol between the bride and groom and their respective families.

During this rite, the ladies split into two groups, one siding with the groom and the other with the bride. The game is played in such a manner that both the sides win and lose one after another. A lot of jokes and taunting remarks are made during the process, inciting a lot of laughter and mirth.

This ritual, along with the Lahakori rite, tends to bring the two families closer together in an informal way by poking jokes, making fun of each other, and adopting mockery and mimicking as a tool to create an informal and genial atmosphere of bonhomie and friendship. It removes the last vestiges of stiff-upper lip environment of solemnity and formality, and replaces it with close informal ties. It must be noted that prior to these two rituals, the two families, i.e. that of the bride as well as the groom, were alien to each other, not knowing each other's customs and norms. Now with so much laughter and jokes flying around, the stiffness of a formal ceremony is done away with, and it is replaced with an informal atmosphere of friendship and goodwill.]

सीय मातु मन मुदित उत्तरति आरति ।
को कहि सकइ आनंद मगन भइ भारति ।।151 ।।
जुबति जूथ रनिवास रहस बस एहि बिधि ।
देखि देखि सिय राम सकल मंगल निधि ।।152 ।।

siya mātu mana mudita utāraṭi āraṭi.
kō kahi saka'i ānanda magana bha'i bhāraṭi. 151.
jubati jūtha ranivāsa rahasa basa ēhi bidhi.
dēkhi dēkhi siya rāma sakala maṅgala nidhi. 152.

151-152. The mind and heart ('Mana') of Sita's mother became very exhilarated as she performed the Arti (of the couple)¹. [Sita's mother did the Arti to bless the couple, Lord Ram and Sita, as well as to wish them good in future. The light of the lamps is symbolic of the lighted path that stands for a bright future that is wished for the person to whom the Arti is shown.]

Tulsidas wonders—'Who can describe the exuberance, the warmth, the intensity of happiness, joy and delight that overflowed on that occasion? Even Saraswati (the goddess of speech) became overwhelmed with joy and delight so much so that she too became dumbfounded and speechless.'²

[In other words, the atmosphere at that time was fully charged with the emotions of love, affection, warmth and happiness that filled it and radiated in all the directions. These emotions were of such intensity and so divine that one could experience them and enjoy them but not able to describe them in words just like a man eating some delicious food enjoys the taste but is unable to describe it in words which would make others experience and enjoy the same taste as he did while he was eating the delicacy.] (151)

In this way, the group of young women as well as the entire bride's household got overwhelmed with joy and happiness as they watched, mesmerised and enthralled, the glamorous, majestic and magnificent image of Lord Ram and Sita standing together, an image that was like a treasury of all happiness, auspiciousness, good fortunes, luck and well-being ('Mangal Nidhi')². (152)

[Note—¹Refer verse no. 136 above along with its accompanying note.

²Refer verse no. 141 above along with its accompanying note.

³Refer verse nos. 130, 134, 136, and Chanda no. 17 above along with their accompanying notes.]

मंगल निधान बिलोकि लोयन लाय लूटति नागरीं ।
दइ जनक तिनिहुँ कुँवरि कुँवर बिबाह सुनि आनँद भरीं ।।
कल्यान मो कल्यान पाइ बितान छबि मन मोहइ ।
सुरधेनु ससि सुरमनि सहित मानहुँ कलप तरु सोहई ।।19 ।।

chanda:

maṅgala nidhāna bilōki lōyana lāya lūṭati nāgarīm.
da'i janaka tinihum' kum'vari kum'vara bibāha suni ānam'da bharīm.
kalyāna mō kalyāna pā'i bitāna chabi mana mōha'i.
suradhēnu sasi suramani sahita mānahum' kalapa taru sōha'ī. 19.

Chanda 19. Watching Sri Ram and Sita, who are like a treasury of auspiciousness, good fortunes and all-round welfare, the clever women are thoroughly enjoying the benefit of having their eyes¹.

Janak gave his other three princesses in marriage to the remaining three princes. [Sita had one other sister named Urmila. She was married to Laxman. Janak's brother, named Kushdhvaj or Kushketu, had two daughters—Mandavi and Srutikirti. They were married to Bharat and Shatrughan respectively.]²

Hearing this excellent news that all the four daughters have been married to the four brothers, the subjects of the kingdom were overjoyed and delighted. [They had prayed that at least Sita should be married to Lord Ram. So when they learnt that all of them have been married simultaneously to the four brothers, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, their joy and happiness knew no bounds. They had expected only one reward, and now they are getting their hands full of rewards. The citizens could not sufficiently thank their good luck and the gods who not only listened to their prayers to get Sita married to Lord Ram, but went many steps ahead to reward them with happy tidings they had never imagined in their dreams that all the four princesses would be married to the four wonderful princes.]³

In this way, good tidings and happy events multiplied manifold times, and these made the marriage pavilion look all the more energized, fantastic, exuberant, colourful and vibrant. The marriage pavilion looked so wonderful⁴ with the three couples present together in it as if the Kalpa Tree (the all wish-fulfilling tree of Gods) is standing proudly and majestically alongside the Kamdhenu (the all wish-fulfilling cow of Gods), the Moon God, and the Chintamani (the magical gem that removes all worries)⁵.

[Here, the Kalpa Tree is Lord Ram, and the other three divine entities such as Kamdhenu cow, the Moon God and the Chintamani are represented by Ram's three brothers, viz. Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan.

This stanza can also be interpreted to mean that the Kalpa Tree stands for the pair of Ram and Sita, and the other three entities such as the Kamdhenu cow, the Moon God and the Chintamani stand respectively for the other three couples, viz. Laxman and Urmila, Bharat and Mandavi, and Shatrughan and Srutikirti.] (Chanda no. 19)

[Note—¹Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda stanza no. 4, line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 326; (b) Chanda stanza no. 1, line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 327; (c) Chanda stanza no. 2, line nos. 2 and 4 that precede Doha no. 327; (d) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 327.

(ii) Geetawali, Baal Kand, verse no. 105-106, and 108.

²Refer: (i) Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chanda stanza no. 2, line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 325—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.

(ii) However, in Geetawali, Baal Kand, there is mention of only Laxman's marriage to Urmila in verse no. 107, and a passing reference to the marriage of all the four brothers in verse no. 104, stanza no. 3.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 222—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 223; and (b) from Doha no. 311 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 1-4—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 312 that reiterate precisely the same idea.

⁴The magnificence and glory of the marriage platform after Lord Ram came there and the rituals for the marriage began is described succinctly in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, in the entire Chanda that precedes Doha no. 320.

⁵Refer: Verse no. 153-155 below.]

जनक अनुज तनया दोउ परम मनोरम ।
जेठि भरत कहँ ब्याहि रूप रति सय सम ॥153 ॥
सिय लघु भगिनि लखन कहँ रूप उजागरि ।
लखन अनुज श्रुतकीरति सब गुन आगरि ॥154 ॥

janaka anuja tanayā dō'u parama manōrama.
jēṭhi bharata kaham̐ byāhi rūpa rati saya sama. 153.
siya laghu bhagini lakhana kahum̐ rūpa ujāgari.
lakhana anuja śrutakīrati saba guna āgari.154.

153-154. Janak's younger brother (Kushdhvaj) had two daughters who were most beautiful and charming. Out of them, the elder one (Mandavi)—who was like hundreds of Ratis in beauty—was married to Bharat. [Rati is the divine consort of Kamdeo-cupid; she is symbolic of stupendous beauty.] (153)

Sita's younger sister (Urmila)—who was very famous owing to her radiant beauty and charm—was married to Laxman. And Laxman's younger brother (Shatrughan) was married to Srutikirti who was a treasury of all noble virtues and qualities. (154)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chanda stanza no. 2, line no. 2—to stanza no. 3, line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 325.]

राम बिबाह समान बिबाह तीनिउ भए ।
जीवन फल लोचन फल बिधि सब कहँ दए ॥155 ॥
दाइज भयउ बिबिध बिधि जाइ न सो गनि ।
दासी दास बाजि गज हेम बसन मनि ॥156 ॥

rāma bibāha samāna bibāha tīni'u bha'ē.
jīvana phala lōcana phala bidhi saba kaham̐ da'ē. 155.

dā'ija bhaya'u bibidha bidhi jā'i na sō gani.
dāsī dāsa bāji gaja hēma basana mani. 156.

155-156. The other three marriages of the three brothers of Lord Ram were solemnised in the same manner as that of the Lord himself¹. In this way, the creator rewarded everyone with the fruit of getting this life as well as of having eyes (eyesight)². (155)

Various types of marriage gifts (dowry) such as male and female servants/attendants, elephants and horses, gold (in the form of ornaments and other things), beautiful clothes, wearing apparels, garments and robes, as well as priceless gems and jewels were given by Janak. These gifts were so immense that it is not possible to either describe them or list them.³ (156)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 326.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 222; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 249; (c) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 310; (d) Doha no. 311 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 326. and (b) Doha no. 333 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 4-8.]

दान मान परमान प्रेम पूरन किए।
समधी सहित बरात बिनय बस करि लिए॥157॥
गे जनवासे राउ संगु सुत सुतबहु।
जनु पाए फल चारि सहित साधन चहु॥158॥

dāna māna paramāna prēma pūrana ki'ē.
samadhī sahita barāta binaya basa kari li'ē. 157.
gē janavāsē rā'u saṅgu suta sutabahu.
janu pā'ē phala cāri sahita sādhana cahu. 158.

157-158. By making immense gifts and showing warmth, honour and respect to all the guests, king Janak managed to endear everyone in the marriage party, making them feel at home, happy and cheerful. He showed so much genuine warmth and friendship that everyone, including the in-law's family (i.e. king Dasrath and his kith and kin), felt fully contented and grateful to him. Janak left no stones unturned to make the guests contented and happy, and they fully appreciated his noble gestures and sincerity of approach. Hence, Janak was able to win over their hearts with his dedicated service, politeness, all possible humility, simplicity and prayerful demeanours that he could muster.¹ (157)

Then the king (Dasrath), accompanied by his four sons and daughter-in-laws, went to the place where he had been lodged². It appeared that he has successfully done the four 'Sadhans' which helped him to obtain the four legendary great 'fruits' or rewards³.

[The 'Sadhans' are the four noble paths, ways, means etc. that one follows to achieve desired results in any endeavour. When these four Sadhans are done properly, the person is rewarded by the 'four great fruits'. These 'fruits' are the following—(i) Artha or financial well-being, (ii) Dharma or being able to successfully fulfill all requirements

of auspiciousness and righteousness; (iii) Kaam or being able to fulfill all desires and wishes, and (iv) Moksha or being able to attain emancipation and salvation for the soul.

The four Sadhans are—(i) ‘Bhakti’ or devotion and dedication for the Lord God, (ii) ‘Tapasya’ or doing penances and observing austerities, (iii) ‘Shradha’ or having respect and honour for the Lord God and the path of Dharma, and (iv) ‘Seva’ or doing selfless service.

In this verse, the four ‘Sadhans’ refer to his four sons, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, while the four ‘fruits’ refer to their respective brides, i.e. Sita, Urmila, Mandavi and Srurkriti. Well, every father would want that he gets a good bride for his sons, and when this happens he feels very happy and fulfilled. This was the case with Dasrath too.] (158)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 as well as Chanda stanza no. 3, line no. 4 that precede Doha no. 326. Janak even asked for forgiveness if there was any deficiency in his service for the guests, or if he may have transgressed certain norms or shown undue haste in his attempt to please them—for he had no intention to cause any sort of annoyance or embarrassment to anyone, but he was merely trying to do his best to make them feel happy and comfortable.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chanda stanza no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 326; (b) Doha no. 329.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 325.]

चहु प्रकार जेवनार भई बहु भौतिन्ह ।
भोजन करत अवधपति सहित बरातिन्ह ।।159 ।।
देहि गारि बर नारि नाम लै दुहु दिसि ।
जेवत बढ्यो अनंद सुहावनि सो निसि ।।160 ।।

cahu prakāra jēvanāra bha'ī bahu bhām'tinha.
bhōjana karata avadhapati sahita barātinha. 159.
dēhi gāri bara nāri nāma lai duhu disi.
jēnvata barha'īō ananda suhāvani sō nisi. 160.

159-160. Sumptuous food consisting of fine delectable dishes of all the four major categories of food that covered all shades of taste¹ were prepared with great care for the grand feast that was organized for the grooms and the marriage party. The king of Ayodhya (Dasrath), along with the rest of the members of the royal entourage, began eating and enjoying the food.² (159)

Beautiful women merrily began singing melodious songs that contained lyrics teasing the members of the groom's side as well as the bride's side, amusing the guests and the hosts alike, and evoking mirth and laughter in the entire assembly³. Everyone was thoroughly enjoying the moment as they ate the wonderful food that was served. The overall environment of bonhomie and the cheerfulness that prevailed at that time made the night appear very pleasant, charming and enjoyable indeed. (160)

[Note—¹The four major categories of food served at the grand feast are as follows—(a) ‘Bhakshya’: that which is eaten by tearing and lacerating with the help of teeth, e.g. bread, chewing of sugarcane; (b) ‘Bhojya’: that which is cooked and eaten with fingers or spoons, e.g. rice, curry; (c) ‘Lehya’: that which is licked with the tongue, e.g. eating pickles or honey; and (d) ‘Choshya’: that which is sucked e.g. water, milk.

The major types of tastes are the following flavours that the tongue feels—sweet, acidic, bitter, pungent, sour and salty. They are compared to the six seasons in this world. Refer *Bhavana Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, verse no. 2, stanza no 10.

Sometimes, the six tastes are listed as being sweet, salty, sour, bitter, pungent or hot, and astringent. Sometimes acidic (vinegar) and bland are also regarded as separate category of tastes. Refer *Garbho-panishad*, verse no. 1 of Krishna Yajur Veda tradition.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 328 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1, 8; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-5, 8 that precede Doha no. 329.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1, 6-7 that precede Doha no. 329.]

सो निसि सोहावनि मधुर गावति बाजने बाजहिं भले ।
नृप कियो भोजन पान पाइ प्रमोद जनवासेहि चले ।।
नट भाट मागध सूत जाचक जस प्रतापहि बरनहीं ।
सानंद भूसुर बृंद मनि गज देत मन करषै नहीं ।।20 ।।

chanda:

sō nisi sōhāvani madhura gāvati bājanē bājahiṁ bhalē.
nr̥pa kiyō bhōjana pāna pā'i pramōda janavāsēhi calē.
naṭa bhāṭa māgadha sūta jācaka jasa pratāpahi baranahīṁ.
sānanda bhūsura bṛnda mani gaja dēta mana karaṣai nahīṁ. 20.

Chanda 20. That night of the grand feast became memorable as it was exceptionally enjoyable, pleasant and enchanting. The women merrily sang sweet and melodious songs. The best of the musical instruments of the day were being played on that occasion.

Having satisfied himself with food and drink, the king (Dasrath) felt happy and contented. He then proceeded to the place of his lodging¹.

The Nuts (dancers; acrobats), Bhaats (royal bards; minstrels), Magadhs (common bards; lay minstrels), the Suts (heralds) and Yaachaks (the beggars; alm-seekers)—all of them began lauding the great king and praising his glories.

The king on his part never felt hesitant in cheerfully giving away gems and elephants liberally to Brahmins as donation so much so that the more he gave the more he wanted to give.² (Chanda no. 20)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 329 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 331 that describe these events at the time of Dasrath going to his lodging place after the feast; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 340 that describe these events at the time of departure of the groom's party from Janakpur on their home to Ayodhya.]

Departure of Sri Ram's marriage party back for Ayodhya

करि करि बिनय कछुक दिन राखि बरातिन्ह ।
जनक कीन्ह पहुनाई अगनित भाँतिन्ह ।।161 ।।
प्रात बरात चलिहि सुनि भूपति भामिनि ।

परि न बिरह बस नींद बीति गइ जामिनि ।।162 ।।

kari kari binaya kachuka dina rākhi barātinha.
janaka kīnha pahunāī aganita bhāmītinha. 161.
prāta barāta calihi suni bhūpati bhāmini.
pari na biraha basa nīnda bīti ga'i jāmini. 162.

161-162. [When king Dasrath expressed his desire to return to Ayodhya—] King Janak repeatedly prayed to the groom's party to stay for some more days after the marriage, and they obliged him by prolonging their stay for a few more days while he (Janak) served them in hundreds of ways (i.e. in all possible ways)¹. (161)

But when the news finally came that the groom's party will go back the next morning, the queens in the royal household (of Janak) could not sleep the whole night, dismayed at the inevitable separation and the loneliness that would follow the exit of the guests². (162)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 332 where the same idea is reiterated but with an additional information that when many days passed and Janak was reluctant to allow Dasrath to go back, the two wise sages, Vishwamitra and Shatanand, went to Janak and persuaded him to be practical and let the groom's party go back to its kingdom. A lot many days have already passed, and more delay would jeopardize the administration of both the kingdoms. After all, a 'guest' cannot remain forever in the host's place.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 332; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 334; and (c) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 336.]

खरभर नगर नारि नर बिधिहि मनावहिं ।
बार बार ससुरारि राम जेहि आवहिं ।।163 ।।
सकल चलन के साज जनक साजत भए ।
भाइन्ह सहित राम तब भूप-भवन गए ।।164 ।।

kharabhara nagara nāri nara bidhihi manāvahiṁ.
bāra bāra sasurāri rāma jēhi āvahiṁ. 163.
sakala calana kē sāja janaka sājata bha'ē.
bhā'inha sahita rāma taba bhūpa-bhavana ga'ē. 164.

163-164. There was a tumult in the city (and a pall of gloom descended on it) as soon as this news of the departure of the groom's party spread¹. All the men and women folk of the city prayed to (i.e. requested) the Gods that Sri Ram should come back to his in-law's place again and again in the future. (163)

Janak made all the arrangements for the ceremonial departure of the party with full royal honours². Then Sri Ram, accompanied by his brothers, went to the palace of Janak to take permission to leave³. (164)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 335; (c) Doha no. 337.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 333—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 334; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 339.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 334; (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; and (c) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 337.]

सासु उत्तारि आरती करहिं निछावरि ।
निरखि निरखि हियँ हरषहिं सूरति साँवरि ।।165 ।।
मागेउ बिदा राम तब सुनि करुना भरीं ।
परिहरि सकुच सप्रेम पुलकि पायन्ह परीं ।।166 ।।

sāsu utāri āratī karahim nichāvari.
nirakhi nirakhi hiyam̐ haraṣahim sūrati sām̐vari. 165.
māgē'u bidā rāma taba suni karunā bharim̐.
parihari sakuca saprēma pulaki pāyanha parim̐. 166.

165-166. The mother-in-laws did the Arti and made ceremonial offerings to the groom(s)¹. [All the four brothers, Ram, Laxman, Bharat and Shatrughan, had gone to request permission from their mother-in-laws to go back home.]

The queens became exhilarated and thrilled in their hearts as they watched his (Sri Ram's) dark but enchanting image². [Lord Ram had a dark complexion, but inspite of this the Lord looked magnificent, dignified and elegant. His beauteous image or form was so enchanting that the more the queens watched it the more thrilled they became.] (165)

Then Sri Ram asked them to give him permission to leave³. Hearing it, all of them (queens) were overwhelmed with sorrow and sadness of separation⁴. Setting aside all inhibitions and hesitations, they fell down affectionately at his feet and were filled with thrill⁵. (166)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 335.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 337.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 337.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precede Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Doha no. 337; (c) Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 338; (d) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precedes Sortha/Doha no. 336; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 337.]

सीय सहित सब सुता सौंपि कर जोरहिं ।
बार बार रघुनाथहि निरखि निहोरहिं ।।167 ।।
तात तजिय जनि छोह मया राखबि मन ।
अनुचर जानब राउ सहित पुर परिजन ।।168 ।।

sīya sahita saba sutā saumpi kara jōrahim̐.
bāra bāra raghunāthahi nirakhi nihōrahim̐. 167.

tāta tajiya jani chōha mayā rākhabī mana.
anucara jānaba rā'u sahita pura parijana. 168.

167-168. They (Sita's mother and other members of the royal household) formally handed over Sita along with other daughters to their respective husbands¹, and then prayerfully folded their hands as a token for giving permission to leave as well as to show their respect to Lord Ram (and his brothers). They repeatedly glanced at Raghunath (Sri Ram) and prayed to him (167)—‘Oh dear son! Do not ever set aside (i.e. forget) your ties of affection, endearment and love for us. Have mercy, grace and compassion in your heart towards us, and regard the king (Janak) and his subjects as your subordinates.’¹ [The queens were very sad at the time of departure of the bride and the groom. They politely requested Lord Ram and his three brothers not to forget them and the rest of the citizens of Janakpur, and to maintain cordial relationships with them for all times to come.] (168)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 336 along with the accompanying Chanda—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 337.]

जन जानि करब सनेह बलि, कहि दीन बचन सुनावहीं ।
अति प्रेम बारहिं बार रानी बालिकन्हि उर लावहीं ।।
सिय चलत पुरजन नारि हय गय बिहँग मृग ब्याकुल भए ।
सुनि बिनय सासु प्रबोधि तब रघुबंस मनि पितु पहिं गए ।।21 ।।

chanda:

jana jāni karaba sanēha bali, kahi dīna bacana sunāvahīm.
ati prēma bārahīm bāra rānī bālikanhi ura lāvahīm.
siya calata purajana nāri haya gaya bihamṅga mṛga byākula bha'ē.
suni binaya sāsū prabōdhi taba raghubansa mani pitu pahīm ga'ē. 21.

Chanda 21. ‘We sincerely request you to be gracious towards these humble princesses, treating them kindly and affectionately as one of your own followers and servers’—saying this, the queens said many humble words of submission and prayer to the four brothers¹.

[The two queens, Janak's queen and his younger brother's queen who were the mothers of the four brides, politely asked the grooms, the four brothers, to take care of their wives with great sensitivity, love and kindness, to forgive them for any mistakes they may make², and to treat the girls affectionately as one of their own family members as they have become their life-partners from now onwards. Though it is obvious that once a girl is married she becomes a part of the groom's family, but the girls's mother still requests the groom to be kind to her as the bride is new to the environment of the in-law's family and may find it a bit difficult to adjust herself. She may be liable to commit errors or become homesick, so the groom is requested to ensure that she feels at home. He must also protect her against all harm because she is totally dependent upon him and is his life-partner, both in joy as well as in sorrow.]

It is a natural reaction of a loving parent when he or she has to permanently part with the girl-child whom he or she had brought up so lovingly from day one of her life till the day of marriage. The mother is naturally worried about the happiness of her daughter because all of a sudden she is transferred to a completely new surrounding of the in-law's household. The bride's mother is also worried because she has no way to find out about the nature and temperament of the groom and his family members. This uncertainty makes her very worried, but there is nothing she can do except to pray and humbly request the groom to be kind, forgiving and accommodating towards his wife.]

The mothers repeatedly clasped their daughters to their hearts with immense affection and love that appeared to spill over and drown everyone³.

When Sita bade them final goodbye and exited her mother's place to accompany Lord Ram back to Ayodhya, all the men, women, horses, elephants, birds and animals of the city (of Janakpur, her native place) became extremely sad, sorrowful and agitated from the agony of separation⁴.

Having heard the prayers of the mother-in-laws, Sri Ram consoled and reassured them in all possible ways⁵, and then he came back to his father's place (with his newly-wed wife Sita) where the marriage party had been lodged⁶.

[It must be noted that Lord Ram is always given precedence over his brothers as he is the eldest amongst them. So though this Chanda starts with the queens requesting the grooms to take proper care of their respective brides, it concludes with mentioning only Sita and Ram. The other brothers and their brides are deemed to have politely followed Lord Ram who took the lead in taking leave of the mother-in-laws on behalf of all of them, and then departing for the place where his father, king Dasrath, was lodged.] (Chanda no. 21)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 334—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 338. However, the specific verses that correspond to the narration in our present Chanda are cited below—

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 336—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 337.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chanda stanza no. 3, line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 326.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 338.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 337 and its preceding Chaupai line no. 5; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 338; (c) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 337.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 337.]

परे निसानहि घाउ राउ अवधहिं चले ।
सुर गन बरषहिं सुमन सगुन पावहिं भले ॥169॥
जनक जानकिहि भेटि सिखाइ सिखावन ।
सहित सचिव गुर बंधु चले पहुँचावन ॥170॥

parē nisānahi ghā'u rā'u avadhahim calē.
sura gana baraṣahim sumana saguna pāvahim bhalē. 169.
janaka jānakihi bhēṭi sikhā'i sikhāvana.

sahita saciva gura bandhu calē pahumcāvana. 170.

169-170. Musical instruments such as kettle-drums started playing as the king (Dasrath) made his departure for Ayodhya¹. The Gods rained flowers (from the heaven), and many good and auspicious omens occurred at that time². (169)

Janak met Janki (Sita) and gave her his good counsel³. [Janak, like any other father, was overcome with grief of separation from his beloved daughter. But being wise as he was, he advised Sita and the other daughters about the basic norms that a wife must follow in her life—for example, to serve her husband faithfully and loyally, to do everything possible to make him feel happy and contented, to uphold the dignity of both the families, that of her father's as well as of her in-law's, in every thing she does, and to always follow the laws of Dharma, i.e. the laws of propriety, probity, righteousness and ethics.]

He accompanied the groom's party for quite a distance together with his ministers, Guru and brothers to see them off⁴. (170)

[Note—This entire episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 339—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343. However, the specific verses that correspond to the narration in our present verse nos. 169-170 are cited below—

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 339; (b) Line no. 2 of Doha no. 339; (c) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343; (d) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 344.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) line no. 1 of Doha no. 339; (b) Doha no. 347; (c) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 348.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 334; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 339. However, the difference between the narration in our present book 'Janki Mangal' and Ram Charit Manas is that whereas in the former it is Janak who teaches Sita about the basic laws of good conduct that she must remember in her life, it is Sita's mother and her companions who advise her in Ram Charit Manas.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 339—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343.]

प्रेम पुलकि कहि राय फिरिय अब राजन ।
करत परस्पर बिनय सकल गुन भाजन ॥171॥
कहेउ जनक कर जोरि कीन्ह मोहि आपन ।
रघुकुल तिलक सदा तुम उथपन थापन ॥172॥

prēma pulaki kahi rāya phiriya aba rājana.
karata paraspara binaya sakala guna bhājana. 171.
kahē'u janaka kara jōri kīnha mōhi āpana.
raghukula tilaka sadā tuma uthapana thāpana. 172.

171-172. The king (Dasrath) was overjoyed and thrilled with affections when he saw the respect and courteousness that Janak had shown towards him and the rest of the bride's party by coming to such a great distance to see them off. So he finally stopped and pleaded with Janak to return to his city.

Dasrath told Janak, 'Oh great king! Please be kind to return now, for you have already come for such a long distance'.

Then both the kings—who were virtually receptacles of virtuous and noble characters—began earnestly requesting and pleading with each other¹. [In other words, while Dasrath pleaded with Janak to return back to his city for he has already come very far, the latter requested the former to let him go some further distance with him. This continued for quite some time and distance.]² (171)

Janak said with folded hands and palms touching each other as a mark of great respect for Dasrath, 'Oh the most exalted and noble one in king Raghu's clan. You have obliged me so much, and have been kind enough to have accepted me as one of your relatives (by accepting my daughters as the brides for your noble sons). You always establish those who have been unfortunate, who are on the verge of ruin and are desperate (i.e. you are very magnanimous, benevolent, beneficent and kind towards those who are junior to you and seek your patronage). I am so privileged to have you as my in-law, and feel so thankful and obliged.'² (172)

[Note—These verses are in continuation of verse no. 170 where it is said that Janak went for quite a distance to see off the groom's party.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 340.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 340 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8 where Janak thanks Dasrath and his own good luck, and (b) from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 343 where Janak has politely prayed to and thanked Lord Ram and his three brothers, as well as their Gurus, sage Vishwamitra and sage Vashistha, before taking his leave and returning to his city.]

बिलग न मानब मोर जो बोलि पढायउँ ।
प्रभु प्रसाद जसु जानि सकल सुख पायउँ ।।173 ।।
पुनि बसिष्ठ आदिक मुनि बंदि महीपति ।
गहि कौसिक के पाइ कीन्ह बिनती अति ।।174 ।।

bilaga na mānaba mōra jō bōli paṭhāya'um.
prabhu prasāda jasu jāni sakala sukha pāya'um. 173.
puni basiṣṭha ādika muni bandi mahīpati.
gahi kausika kē pā'i kīnha binatī ati. 174.

173-174. [Janak continued--] 'I gave you the trouble of having to come here all the way from Ayodhya—but please do not mind my audacity and misdemeanour. By the grace of the Lord, I came to realise your fame and glory (and this was the reason why I took the liberty to give you so much trouble). Indeed it has been my privilege to have you at my place as my honoured guest, and being able to serve you in whatever little way I could. This has given me great happiness and pleasure.'¹

[Janak showed great respect to Dasrath. He said that though under normal circumstance it would have been proper if he had himself gone to Ayodhya to bring him to Janakpur, but it was not advisable as it would have been against established norms and traditions. This is because Dasrath's son Lord Ram was to be married to Janak's daughter Sita, and the bride's father does not go personally to the groom's father to invite him with

the marriage party, but this invitation is sent through a messenger. Now, once this is done and the marriage is over, the two families are bonded together in a standing relationship. With this relationship now formalized and cemented, Janak says that he is so fortunate and lucky to have found a great king of Dasrath's stature as his brotherly king. This marriage has indeed created a rare sort of union and alliance which has brought two renowned and mighty kings of the time together.] (173)

Thereafter, he (Janak) duly worshipped, paid his obeisance to and honoured sage Vashistha and other sages and seers present on the occasion, and then caught hold of the feet of Kaushik (Vishwamitra) and prayed to him most humbly, expressing his sense of profound gratitude and heart-felt thankfulness to him². (174)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 340 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 341 where Janak has paid his obeisance to the assembled sages and seers; (b) Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 343 where Janak paid his respects and prayed to sage Vishwamitra.]

भाइन्ह सहित बहोरि बिनय रघुबीरहिं ।
गदगद कंठ नयन जल उर धरि धीरहिं ॥175॥
कृपा सिंधु सुख सिंधु सुजान सिरोमनि ।
तात समय सुधि करबि छोह छाड़ब जनि ॥176॥

bhā'inha sahita bahōri binaya raghubīrahim.
gadagada kaṇṭha nayana jala ura dhari dhīrahim. 175.
kṛpā sindhu sukha sindhu sujāna sirōmani.
tāta samaya sudhi karabi chōha chāṛaba jani. 176.

175-176. After that, he (Janak) prayed to Raghubir (Sri Ram) along with his brothers. His throat was choked with emotions of warm love, affection, delight and exhilaration as well as from the sorrow of separation (from his dearest daughter Sita, his son-in-law Sri Ram, as well as other daughters and their husbands, the other brothers of Sri Ram). Tears welled up and rolled down from his eyes.

Nevertheless, he somehow managed to gather courage and patience in his overwhelmed heart, and said to Lord Ram—'Oh an ocean of grace, mercy and kindness! Oh an ocean of happiness, joy and delight! Oh the most exalted amongst gentlemen who are virtuous, righteous and noble! Oh my dear and beloved son! Remember us from time to time. Never forsake us and your affection and warmth for us.' (175-176)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 341—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 342.

Lord Ram lovingly reciprocated Janak's emotions. See Chanda no. 22 below.]

जनि छोह छाड़ब बिनय सुनि रघुबीर बहु बिनती करी ।
मिलि भेटि सहित सनेह फिरेउ बिदेह मन धीरज धरी ॥
सो समौ कहत न बनत कछु सब भुवन भरि करुना रहे ।
तब कीन्ह कोसलपति पयान निसान बाजे गहगहे ॥22॥

chanda:

jani chōha chāṛaba binaya suni raghubīra bahu binatī karī.
mili bhēṭi sahita sanēha phirē'u bidēha mana dhīraja dhārī.
sō samau kahata na banata kachu saba bhuvana bhari karunā rahē.
taba kīnha kōsalapati payāna nisāna bājē gahagahē. 22.

Chanda 22. Hearing the earnest prayers of Janak who had said (in verse no. 176 above) ‘do not abandon your warmth and affections for us’, Raghubir (Sri Ram) felt touched, and he reciprocated his father-in-law’s sentiments by also praying to him politely with the same warmth and in the same manner. [That is, Lord Ram assured Janak that he need not worry at all as the relationship that has been established now between the two families is a permanent one. There is no question of him or any other member of his family ever foretelling Janak and his affectionate warmth.]¹

Thereafter, Videh² (Janak) met everyone else (for the last time) and bid them all farewell³, and gathering courage and fortitude in his heart, he returned back (to his city)⁴. It is not possible to say anything about those sorrowful moments—the entire world was filled with grief, sorrow, gloom and sadness⁵.

After that, the lord of Kaushal (king Dasrath) cheerfully made his exit from Janakpur and headed for his own capital of Ayodhya to the accompaniment of the beating of drums and playing of trumpets⁶. (Chanda no. 22)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 342.

²King Janak was called Videh which means ‘one without a body’. It means that he was the most renunciate king, deeply steeped in the philosophy of Vedanta which regards the soul as the true self and the body of the individual as a distinct entity which is separate from the soul and is perishable. A renunciate person is one who, inter-alia, does not get involved with the body, its sense organs, their objects of gratification in this illusionary, artificial, delusionary, mundane world, and remains aloof from the deeds done by the body by the virtue of taking birth due to past deeds done by the creature. Such a soul is called enlightened, self-realised, and by extension, one who is not attached to his body and the surrounding world. King Janak was the only king who had the honour of having this title.

But the charm of the Lord was such that even such an enlightened king lost his composure and showed signs of worries, of amusement, of affection and attachments, of sorrows of separation and remorse—in fact, any emotion or sentiment at all.

³Besides Lord Ram, Janak had also met and duly honoured the other three brothers individually. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 342—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 343.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precede Doha no. 343.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 333; (b) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 334; (c) Doha no. 337; and (d) Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 338.

⁶Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 343; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 344.

Refer also to verse no. 169 of the current book ‘Janki Mangal’.]

पंथ मिले भृगुनाथ हाथ फरसा लिए।
 डाटहिं आँखि देखाइ कोप दारुन किए॥177॥
 राम कीन्ह परितोष रोष रिस परिहरि।
 चले सौँप सारंग सुफल लोचन करि॥178॥

pantha milē bhr̥gunātha hātha pharasā li'ē.
 ḍāṭahim āṁkhi dēkhā'i kōpa dārūna ki'ē. 177.
 rāma kīnha paritōṣa rōṣa risa parihari.
 calē saumpa sārāṅga suphala lōcana kari. 178.

177-178. On the way back to Ayodhya, they met Bhr̥gunath (sage Parashuram) with a battle-axe in his hand. He started scolding and pouring scorn at them with vengeance, seeking retribution for the breaking of Lord Shiva's bow. He glared at them menacingly with angry and wrathful eyes¹. (177)

But Sri Ram satisfied him (i.e. calmed him down with polite words)². The great sage then regretted for his anger and the way he had behaved with Lord Ram³, gave the Lord his own bow (that he had got from Lord Vishnu)⁴, and then seeking forgiveness from the Lord and blessing himself that he was so lucky to have seen the Supreme Being personally at so close quarters⁵, he went peacefully away (to do penances)⁶. (178)

[Note—Sage Parashuram was a great devotee of Lord Shiva. So when he heard the sound of the breaking of the bow and learnt that it was indeed Shiva's bow, he mistook it as someone doing it to insult Shiva. He became exceedingly angry and vehement. At that time Parashuram had not known that Ram was not an ordinary prince or king, but an incarnation of Lord Vishnu himself in a human form. So he rushed to confront the Lord and seek revenge.

He had not realised that if Shiva had not wanted the bow to break, no power on earth could have done it. Therefore, the very fact that the bow broke so easily in the hands of Lord Ram goes to prove that Shiva had wanted it to be so. Lord Ram is worshipped by Shiva, and the latter constantly repeats the holy name of 'Ram' as the great spiritual Mantra that provides the creature emancipation and salvation. Lord Shiva is known to provide liberation and deliverance to a dying man by uttering this holy name of 'Ram' in the dying man's ears. In fact, Lord Ram too worships Lord Shiva, and this is proved when the Lord had established a Lingam and invoked Shiva's blessings before the commencement of the war at Lanka to free Sita from the captivity of the demon king Ravana. Both Shiva and Ram have independently declared on different occasions that if someone wishes to please either of them by worship and prayer then he must please the other deity too. In other words, Shiva and Ram are the two faces of the same Supreme Being.

However, when Parashuram rushed and started throwing tantrums in front of Lord Ram, his anger was gradually dissipated like a man beating his head against a mountain. By and by, his anger vanished and he realised the truth of the matter. So the sage asked Lord Ram to forgive him and went to the mountains to do penances to regain his glory that was lost due to his unwarranted showing of anger.

Another important point is this—in Tulsidas' epic 'Ram Charit Manas', popularly known as the Ramayana, sage Parashuram arrives at the venue of the marriage ceremony itself, and not while the marriage party was returning back to Ayodhya as is depicted here in Janki Mangal. It ought to be noted that this latter version is endorsed in the Adhyatma Ramayan of Veda Vyas too—refer: Baal Kand, Canto no. 7.

In another great version of the story of the Ramayana, the one written by sage Valmiki, this version of Parashuram meeting Lord Ram and his party while they were going back to Ayodhya after marriage is also endorsed in its Baal Kand, Canto nos. 74-76.

¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 268; (b) Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 270; (c) Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 271; (d) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 274; (e) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precedes Doha no. 275; (f) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 276; (g) Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 281.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 279; (b) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 281; (c) Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 282; (d) Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 283.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 284 and its following Chaupai line nos. 1-7 that precede Doha no. 285.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 284.

⁵Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 285.

Refer also to Tulsidas' book known as 'Dohawali', verse nos. 431-433. A detailed English version of this book has been published by me and available at www.amazon.com in a kindle version, as well as at www.createpace.com in a print version.]

Return of the marriage party at Ayodhya

रघुबर भुज बल देखि उछाह बरातिन्ह ।
मुदित राउ लखि सनमुख बिधि सब भाँतिन्ह ।।179।।
एहि बिधि ब्याहि सकल सुत जग जसु छायउ ।
मग लोगन्हि सुख देत अवधपति आयउ ।।180।।

raghubara bhuja bala dēkhi uchāha barātinha.
mudita rā'u lakhi sanamukha bidhi saba bhāmṭinha. 179.
ēhi bidhi byāhi sakala suta jaga jasu chāya'u.
maga lōganhi sukha dēta avadhapati āya'u. 180.

179-180. Recalling the strength of Lord Ram's arms (by which he broke the mighty bow of Lord Shiva as easily as breaking a twig) and observing the magical effect of his dynamic personality (that humbled even the formidable sage Parashuram whose anger was legendary in as much as it created terror in the heart of those who dared to confront him), both king Dasrath as well as all the members of the marriage party felt extremely happy and exhilarated. The king felt especially happy, honoured and glad when he realised that the Creator had been exceptionally kind towards him (because he was blessed with such a wonderful and powerful son as Lord Sri Ram)¹. (179)

In this manner, having got all his sons married in a glorious way, the king (Dasrath) was able to spread his fame and glory far and wide in all the directions of the world. [All the great kings and princes of the time had assembled at Janakpur to try their hands at lifting and stringing the formidable bow to prove their strength and might, or to

simply witness the event. It was in this gathering that Lord Ram had broken the bow very easily when all of the competitors had failed to as much as move the bow a fraction of an inch. This in itself was no mean achievement, and was enough to establish the fame and glory of Ram throughout the world. It is natural that any father would feel extremely proud and honoured if his son achieves such a great feat, and so was the case with Dasrath.]

Delighting the residents who lived along the way and spreading joy all around, the king finally returned back to his capital at Ayodhya². (180)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 291—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 294.

It must be noted, however, that in the book 'Ram Charit Manas' this happiness of Dasrath and others in the royal assembly relates to the time when the messenger of king Janak described the bow-breaking ceremony in the court of king Dasrath where he had gone to invite the latter to come to Janakpur to attend the marriage ceremony of Sri Ram.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 343 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 7-8.]

Celebrations in Ayodhya

होहिं सुमंगल सगुन सुमन सुर बरषहिं ।
नगर कोलाहल भयउ नारि नर हरषहिं ।।181।।
घाट बाट पुर द्वार बजार बनावहिं ।
बीथीं सीचि सुगंध सुमंगल गावहिं ।।182।।

hōhiṃ sumaṅgala saguna sumana sura baraṣahiṃ.
nagara kōlāhala bhaya'u nāri nara haraṣahiṃ. 181.
ghāṭa bāṭa pura dvāra bajāra banāvahiṃ.
bīthiṃ sīnci sugandha sumaṅgala gāvahiṃ. 182.

181-182. When the marriage party arrived at Ayodhya, numerous auspicious signs and favourable omens started occurring. The Gods are showered flowers from the sky. The city erupted in a mood of exhilaration and joyous tumult. All the men and women folk of the city were ecstatic with joy and became very excited. (181)

The citizens enthusiastically decorated the various Ghats (banks of river Saryu), the roads and avenues, the buildings and palaces, the marketplaces and each individual house of the city. All the avenues, streets, lanes and by-lanes were washed with scented water. They sang auspicious and felicitous songs in merriment to celebrate the arrival of the marriage party with the newly wed princes. (182)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 344—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 345; (b) Chaupai line nos. 1 that precedes Doha no. 347—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 348; (c) Chaupai line nos. 6 that precedes Doha no. 349; (d) Doha no. 353; (e) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 355.

Refer also verse no. 183-184 and Chanda no. 23 of this book 'Janki Mangal' below.]

चौकैं पूरैं चारु कलस ध्वज साजहिं ।
 बिबिधि प्रकार गहागह बाजन बाजहिं ।।183 ।।
 बंदनवार बितान पताका घर घर ।
 रोपे सफल सपल्लव मंगल तरुबर ।।184 ।।

caiṅkaiṁ pūraiṁ cāru kalasa dhvaja sājahim.
 bibidhi prakāra gahāgaha bājana bājahim. 183.
 bandanavāra bitāna patākā ghara ghara.
 rōpē saphala sapallava maṅgala tarubara. 184.

183-184. The denizens of the city made lovely geometrical patterns, such as elegant squares and circles, on the ground, and adorned them with ceremonial pitchers and decorative flags. Many kinds of musical instruments were cheerfully played with gusto and great enthusiasm, and their sound reverberated in the city in all directions. (183)

In every household, festoons, buntings, flags, canopies and awnings were put up, and countless decorative trees, complete with fruits and green leaves, were planted everywhere in the city. (184)

[Note—See forgoing verse nos. 181-182 along with the accompanying note.]

मंगल बिटप मंजुल बिपुल दधि दूब अच्छत रोचना ।
 भरि थार आरति सजहिं सब सारंग सावक लोचना ।।
 मन मुदित कौसल्या सुमित्रा सकल भूपति—भामिनी ।
 सजि साजु परिछन चलीं रामहि मत्त कुंजर गामिनी ।।23 ।।

chanda:

maṅgala biṭapa maṅjula bipula dadhi dūba acchata rōcanā.
 bhari thāra ārati sajahim saba sāraṅga sāvaka lōcanā.
 mana mudita kausalyā sumitrā sakala bhūpati-bhāminī.
 saji sāju parichana calīm rāmahi matta kuṅjara gāminī. 23.

Chanda 23. Many types of beautiful and auspicious trees were planted everywhere in the decorated city.

Women folk, with beautiful eyes resembling those of a fawn, gathered together cheerfully and arranged the different paraphernalia—such as curd, grass, rice-grains and sandalwood etc. arranged on a platter—that are necessary for performing the Arti of the newly-wed princes and their brides.

Kaushalya (the chief queen and mother of Lord Ram), Sumitra (the second queen and mother of Laxman) and other queens were very delighted and jubilant in their hearts. They assembled all the items necessary for the ceremonial welcome to be extended to the newly-wed couples as well as the accompanying marriage party. With this in hand, all of them went out of the palace with a graceful and dignified gait resembling that of a proud and elegant elephant (i.e. they walked majestically with elegance and dignity befitting great queens) to receive and welcome Lord Sri Ram and the marriage party. (Chanda no. 23)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 346 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 1-8.]

बधुन सहित सुत चारिउ मातु निहारहिं ।
 बारहिं बार आरती मुदित उतारहिं ॥185॥
 करहिं निछावरि छिनु छिनु मंगल मुद भरीं ।
 दूलह दुलहिनिन्ह देखि प्रेम पयनिधि परीं ॥186॥

badhuna sahita suta cāri'u mātu nihārahim̐.
 bārahim̐ bāra āratī mudita utārahim̐. 185.
 karahim̐ nichāvāri chinu chinu maṅgala muda bharim̐.
 dūlahā dulahininha dēkhi prēma payanidhi parim̐. 186.

185-186. The mothers intently watch, with great love and warmth overwhelming their hearts, the four sons along with their brides. They become exceedingly cheerful while performing the welcoming Arti. [The 'Arti' is a ritual whereby lighted oil lamps, along with other small things such as rice-grains, kush grass, flowers and curd etc., arranged on a platter are waved in a clockwise movement in the front of the guest as a token of respect and welcome.] (185)

They became overwhelmed with the warmth of joy and happiness, and made offering and sacrifices every other moment. They appeared to have immersed themselves in an ocean of happiness and joy when they saw the brides and the grooms. (186)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, from Doha no. 348—to Doha no. 350.]

देत पावड़े अरघ चलीं लै सादर ।
 उमगि चलेउ आनंद भुवन भुईं बादर ॥187॥
 नारि उहारु उघारि दुलहिनिन्ह देखहिं ।
 नैन लाहु लहि जनम सफल करि लेखहिं ॥188॥

dēta pāvarē aragha calim̐ lai sādara.
 umagi calē'u ānanda bhuvana bhu'im̐ bādara. 187.
 nāri uhāru ughāri dulahininha dēkhahim̐.
 naina lāhu lahi janama saphala kari lēkhahim̐. 188.

187-188. The mothers spread out the ceremonial welcoming carpets and offered libations to the grooms and their brides as they escorted the couples respectfully towards the palace¹. At that time, huge symbolic waves of joy and happiness, exhilaration and ecstasy, warmth and emotions surged and heaved in all the directions of the world, covering the earth as well as the sky². [In other words, there was great rejoicing and joyousness everywhere, in the city as well as other places.] (187)

The women folk lift the veil over the faces of the brides and glance at their beautiful faces. This thrills them no end, and they feel lucky that they have been amply rewarded for having eyes, and that their having taken birth as human beings has been fruitful, worthwhile and rewarding.³ [When the ladies saw the faces of the four brides, they were overjoyed, and thanked their good luck that they could see such beautiful faces

in their lives. They thanked the Creator for giving them a human body with two eyes that could see such a magnificent sight, for if they had been born as some other creature they would have missed this wonderful opportunity.] (188)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 348; (b) Doha no. 349.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 349; (b) Chaupai line nos. 4-6 that precede Doha no. 355.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 325; (b) Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 348; (c) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 349; (d) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 350.]

भवन आनि सनमानि सकल मंगल किए ।
बसन कनक मनि धेनु दान बिप्रन्ह दिए ॥189॥
जाचक कीन्ह निहाल असीसहिं जहँ तहँ ।
पूजे देव पितर सब राम उदय कहँ ॥190॥

bhavana āni sanamāni sakala maṅgala ki'ē.
basana kanaka mani dhēnu dāna bipranha di'ē. 189.
jācaka kīnha nihāla asīsahim jaham' taham'.
pūjē dēva pitara saba rāma udaya kaham'. 190.

189-190. They (the brides and the grooms) were respectfully brought to the royal palace and all auspicious rituals were done¹. Liberal donations in the form of gifts of gold, gems, cows and garments were given to Brahmins². (189)

Alm-seekers and beggars were satisfied with alms and liberal charity. They gave their blessings to the newly-wed couples and the royal family³. Gods and spirits of dead ancestors were worshipped for the welfare, fame and prosperity of Lord Sri Ram⁴. (190)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 349—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 350.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 352.

³Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 351 along with its preceding Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 351.

⁴Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 351.]

नेगचार करि दीनह सबहि पहिरावनि ।
समधी सकल सुआसिनि गुरतिय पावनि ॥191॥
जोरी चारि निहारि असीसत निकसहिं ।
मनहुँ कुमुद बिधु—उदय मुदित मन बिकसहिं ॥192॥

nēgacāra kari dīnaha sabahi pahirāvani.
samadhī sakala su'āsini guratiya pāvani. 191.
jōrīm cāri nihāri asīsata nikasahim'.
manahum' kumuda bidhu-udaya mudita mana bikasahim'. 192.

191-192. They (the queens) did all the traditional rituals according to established procedures and traditions¹. Then they gave magnificent robes and wearing apparels to all—their relatives, kith and kin, all the ladies of the city including the elderly women, as well as to the Guru's wife. (191)

All of them profusely blessed the four couples and came out of the palace². They were as jubilant and cheerful in their hearts as water lilies are at the sight of the rising moon. (192)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) Doha no. 350 Kha; (b) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 352.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand—(a) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 351—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 353; and (b) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha 360.]

बिकसहिं कुमुद जिमि देखि बिधु भइ अवध सुख सोभामई ।
एहि जुगुति राम बिबाह गावहिं सकल कबि कीरति नई ॥
उपबीत ब्याह उछाह जे सिय राम मंगल गावहीं ।
तुलसी सकल कल्यान ते नर नारि अनुदिन पावहीं ॥ 24 ॥

chanda:

bikasahim kumuda jimi dēkhi bidhu bha'i avadha sukha sōbhāmaī.
ēhi juguti rāma bibāha gāvahim sakala kabi kīrati naī.
upabīta byāha uchāha jē siya rāma maṅgala gāvahim.
tulasī sakala kalyāna tē nara nāri anudina pāvahim. 24.

Chanda 24. All the women folk are exhilarant, happy and ecstatic with joy just like the water lilly is when it sees the moon in the night. [The water lilly opens its buds and petals as soon as the moon rises, indicating in a symbolic way that this flower is happy at the sight of the moon. Likewise, when the ladies of the royal household as well as the general women folk of the city of Ayodhya see the newly-wed couples they cheer up and become very happy.]

At that time, Ayodhya was full of magnificence, glamour, elegance, happiness and joy that overflowed all over it. In this way, great poets and expert bards do their best at singing the wonderful and glories events associated with the divine marriage of Lord Ram with Sita.

Tulsidas says that those people who sing these auspicious verses related to the divine marriage of Lord Ram and Sita, verses that provide all round welfare, joy, cheer and happiness to all living beings, would invariably be blessed with good fortunes, well-being, happiness and auspiciousness in all the spheres of their daily life. (Chanda no. 24)

[Note—Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Sortha/Doha no. 361 along with its preceding Chanda line nos. 3-4.]

Jānakī Maṅgala

Of Goswami Tulsidas

(Original Text, Roman Transliteration and
English Exposition with Elaborate Notes)

Appendix

Now we shall read about the great kings of the two great dynasties of Ayodhya and Janakpur to which Lord Ram and Sita belonged respectively.

The lineage of the kings of the Ayodhya dynasty is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Canto 70, while that of Janakpur dynasty is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Baal Kand, Canto 71.

The family tree or the genealogy of Lord Ram

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. ब्रह्मा — | Brahma |
| 2. मरीचि — | Marichi |
| 3. कश्यप— | Kashyap |
| 4. विवस्वान— | Viwaswan |
| 5. वैवस्वतमनु— | Vaiwaswatmanu |
| 6. इक्ष्वाकु— | Ikshwaku |
| 7. कुसि — | Kusi |
| 8. विकुसि— | Vikusi |
| 9. बाण — | Baan |
| 10. अनरण्य— | Anaranya |
| 11. पृथु — | Prithu |
| 12. त्रिशंकु— | Trishanku |
| 13. धुन्धमार— | Dhundhamaar |
| 14. भुवनाश्च— | Bhuvanaascha |
| 15. मान्धाता— | Mandhata |
| 16. सुसन्धि— | Susandhi |
| 17. ध्रुवसन्धि— | Dhruvsandhi |
| 18. भरत— | Bharat |
| 19. असित— | Asit |
| 20. सगर— | Sagar |
| 21. असमंज— | Asamanj |

22. अंशुमान—	Anshuman
23. दिलिप—	Dilip
24. भगीरथ—	Bhagirath
25. ककुस्थ—	Kakushtha
26. रघु —	Raghu
27. प्रवृद्ध—	Pravridha
28. शङ्कण—	Shankan
29. सुदर्शन—	Sudarshan
30. अग्निवर्ण—	Agnivarna
31. शीघ्रंण—	Shighran
32. मरु —	Maru
33. प्रशुश्रुक—	Prashusruk
34. अम्बरीश—	Ambarish
35. नहुष—	Nahush
36. ययाति—	Yayaati
37. नाभाग—	Naabhaag
38. अज —	Aja
39. दशरथ—	Dashrath
40. राम —	Ram

-----*****-----

The family tree or the genealogy of Janki or Sita

1. निमि —	Nimi
2. मिपि —	Mipi
3. जनक (प्रथम)—	Janak (the 1st)
4. उद्रावसु—	Udrawasu
5. नन्दीवर्धन—	Nandiwardhan
6. सुकेतु—	Suketu
7. देवरात—	Devaraata
8. बृहद्रथ—	Brihadrath
9. महावीर—	Mahavir
10. सुधृति—	Sudhriti
11. धृष्टकेतु—	Dhristaketu
12. हर्यश्च—	Haryascha
13. मरु—	Maru
14. प्रतीन्धक—	Pratindhak
15. कीर्तिरथ—	Kirtirath
16. देवमीढ—	Devameedh
17. विबुध—	Bibudh
18. महीध्रक—	Mahidhrak
19. कीर्तिरात—	Kirtiraata

- 20. महारोमा— Mahaaroma
- 21. स्वर्णरोमा— Swarnaroma
- 22. हस्तरोमा— Hastaroma
- 23. श्रीध्वज जनक— Sri Dhvaj
(विदेह) Janak (Videh)
- 24. जानकी (सीता)— Janki (Sita)

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

Genre of Writing: Spiritualism, Philosophy, Metaphysics, Religious, Devotional and Theological.

The author's Books are available for order online both in 'e-book' format and 'paper-back book' format at following websites—

- (a) www.amazon.com (in their 'kindle' + 'paper-back book' versions),
- (b) www.pothi.com (in 'paper-back book' + 'e-book' versions),
- (c) www.draft2digital.com (in 'e-book' version) through the following platforms: (i) Apple (ibooks), (ii) Barnes & Noble (nook), (iii) Kobo, (iv) Page Foundry, (v) Scribd, (vi) Tolino etc.:-

(A) List of Books that are currently available as mentioned above :-

(A-1) (1) The Chariot of God: Dharma Rath; (2) OM and Naad; (3) YOGA—Its Practice and Philosophy according to the Upanishads; (4) Ram Geeta; (5) The Revelation of Creation—as envisioned in the Upanishads; (6) The Pentagon of Creation: As Expounded in the Upanishads; (7) The Triumvirate of Creation; (8) Maya: The Whirlpool of Delusions in Creation; (9) Surdas-Ram Charitawali; (10-a) The legend of Lord Shiva: Book 1 'Lord Shiva's marriage with Parvati'; (10-b) Book 2 'Lord Shiva's Sacred Hymns'; (10-c) Book 3 'Shiva's different names & their significance, Shiva Puran, Upanishads'; (11) the Mahavakyas of the Upanishads; (13) Lord Ram's marriage with Sita (based on Tulsidas' books "Ram Charit Manas", "Janki Mangal", "Ram Lala Nahachu" & "Geetawali", and sage Veda Vyas' book "Adhyatma Ramayan"; (14) "Anthology of Sacred Hymns, Stotras & Mantras of Lord Ram"; (15) "Vairagya Shatkam" of king-sage Bhartrihari; (16) An Anthology of the Sanyas Upanishads-Parts 1

and 2; (17) “Kaag-Bhusund Ramayan” or the “Aadi Ramayan” based on Tulsidas’ Ram Charit Manas; (18) The Legendary Glory of Hanuman; (19) “Narad Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord; (20) “Shandilya Bhakti Sutra”—Aphorisms for Devotion for God and the Principles of Love for the Lord according to the illustrious sage Shandilya; (21) “Bhakti Sutra Mala”—A Garland of Spiritual Wisdom in the form of an Anthology of Aphorisms pertaining to Bhakti or devotion, love and affection for Lord God; (22) Glory of Lord Ram’s Holy Name, Sacred Mantras, Stotras & Hymns; (23) Saints and Non-Saints: Their Distinguishing Characters and Qualities; (24) A True Guru (Qualities, Importance and Need of a True Teacher, Preceptor, Guide and Advisor); (25) “Sundar Kand” of Ram Charit Manas; (26) The Story of Ravana and the Epic War of Lanka—Told in Slow Motion (based on, and will have the full relevant Text of, Ram Charit Manas, Adhyatma Ramayan, Anand Ramayan, Geetawali Ramayan, and Kavitalawali Ramayan); (27) The Great Ancient Sages, Seers, Saints and Enlightened Kings of India; (28) The Metaphor of the Hansa in the Upanishads: The symbolism of a Grand Swan used to explain the wisdom of spiritual and metaphysical principles by the Upanishads.

(A-2) Goswami Tulsidas Series: (1) Book 1- ‘Dohawali’; (2) Book 2- ‘Parvati Mangal’; (3) Book 3- ‘Kavitalawali’; (4) Book 4- ‘Janki Mangal’; (5) Book 5- ‘Ram Lala Nahachu’; (6) Book 6- ‘Geetawali Ramayan’; (7) Book 7- ‘Vairagya Sandipani’; (8) Book 8- ‘Vinai Patrika’; (9) ‘Barvai Ramayan’.

(B) The following Books have been published in ‘Printed-Book Deluxe Editions’ by a reputed Indian Publisher (details given below) :

1. Detailed English renderings, with explanatory notes and commentaries of the 108 Upanishads classified according to the Vedic tradition = 6 volumes; 18 parts. [Vol. 1= Rig Veda Upanishads; Vol. 2= Sam Veda Upanishads; Vol. 3= Shukla Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 4= Krishna Yajur Veda Upanishads; Vol. 5= Atharva Veda Upanishads; Vol. 6= Vedanta Concepts explained with specific references to the relevant Upanishads.]

2. English rendering of Adbhut Ramayan by sage Valmiki.

3. English rendering of Adhyatma Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

4. English rendering of Devi Puran’s Ramayan by sage Veda Vyas.

5. A Divine Biography of Lord Ram & Glory of Lord’s Holy Name.

Name and contact of Publisher of above Printed Books listed under (C):

Chaukhamba Publishing House, Delhi. [Sri Neeraj Gupta.]

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Ansari Road, Darayaganj, Delhi—110002.

Phone: Mobile (Neeraj Gupta)—+919811133683

Office: 011-23286537; 011-32996391

(C) Book under preparation:

A full-blown English rendering of Tulsidas’ epic ‘Ram Charit Manas’ is under preparation. It will be a unique Book and an elaborate one, as it would run into many

thousands of pages that would endeavour to explain each single verse of Ram Charit Manas in detail from different perspectives, with the aid of explanatory notes and references.

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